FLEETWOOD MAC RELIVE TUSK!

MOJO

The Music Magazine

THE BEST THING I'VE HEARD ALL YEAR

As selected by David Crosby, Elvis Costello, Tame Impala, Noel Gallagher, Mark Ronson, Alabama Shakes & more

2015 THE ULTIMATE REVIEW OF THE YEAR

50 ESSENTIAL ALBUMS YOU MUST OWN

BOWIE SPECIAL!

SCARY MONSTERS

35 YEARS ON...

PLUS! THE INSIDE STORY OF HIS STUNNING NEW ALBUM

BOWIE NOW!

THE TRIFFID
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DEVOTIO

WE FOUR KINGS

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LONDON · MEMPHIS · GLEN ELLYN

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"They wanted to know how I produced, how I moved my body."

BRIAN WILSON RECALLS THE DEEP RESEARCH OF MOJO'S FILM OF THE YEAR, LOVE & MERCY, P60

Getty Images

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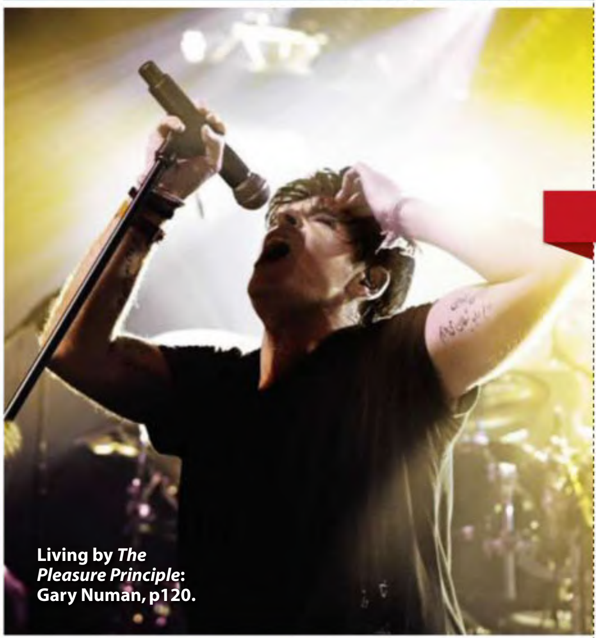
THREE CROWS RECORDS
ETHAN JOHNS
BLACK EYED DOGS
SILVER LINER

RIDE
Nowhere



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MOJO

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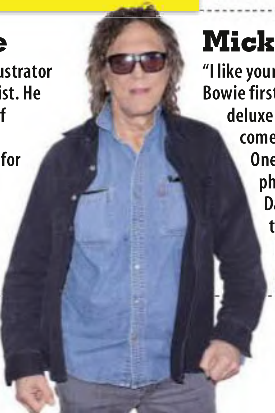
THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE

Chris Nurse

Chris Nurse is a Welsh illustrator and motion graphics artist. He works across a number of commercial platforms in print and moving image for a range of clients that span the globe. Chris is represented by Début Art: http://www.debutart.com



Mick Rock

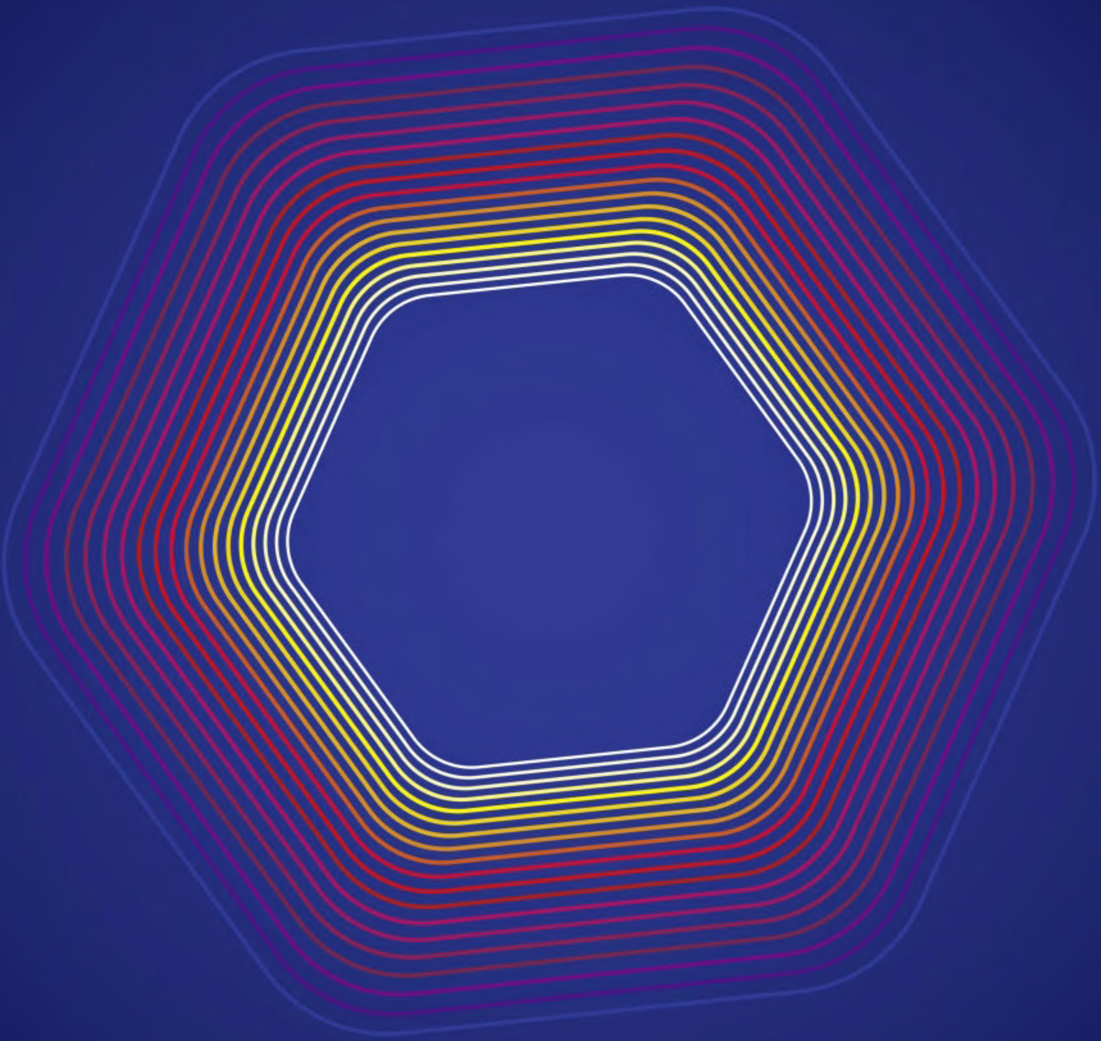
"I like your name." That's how David Bowie first greeted the snapper of the deluxe 1972 Bowie portrait that comes with this issue of MOJO. One of many previously unseen photographs in The Rise Of David Bowie 1972-1973, Rock's tome devoted to Bowie's Ziggy-era transformation, published by Taschen.

Paul Trynka

Former MOJO Editor Paul Trynka travelled to Paris, Ireland and Morocco for his Brian Jones biography, recently published in paperback – here he's seen washing his socks in Brian's house in Jajouka. This month he returns to the subject of his previous book, David Bowie, to investigate *Scary Monsters*.

Chris Nurse, Simon Fernandez, Alamy

PAUL WELLER | SATURNS PATTERN



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2015

MOJO PRESENTS NEW ORDER, JULIA HOLTER, LOW, JOHN GRANT, SUFJAN STEVENS & MORE IN A SELECTION OF THE YEAR'S BEST MUSIC...

courtney barnett
sometimes i sit and think, and sometimes i just sit.

1 Courtney Barnett

Pedestrian At Best

Driven by a super-fuzzed, high-powered riff, Pedestrian At Best is an instant slacker anthem that recalls a time in American music when existential angst collided with irresistible pop nous. Melbourne's Courtney Barnett delivers the track with a definite sense of ennui that wraps itself wonderfully around a set of inspired, playful lyrics. "Give me all your money/And I'll make some origami, honey," remains a brilliantly unlikely hook.

SLEATER - KINNEY / NO CITIES TO LOVE

2 Sleater-Kinney

Bury Our Friends

The first sign of life from Sleater-Kinney's much-mooted comeback album, Bury Our Friends actually emerged in late 2014 and paved the way for their latest long-player, *No Cities To Love*, which was recorded in secret and released in January. "We sound possessed on these songs," said Carrie Brownstein as the album hit the racks. The band's sense of focus is also evident on this tune (and, indeed, throughout the album).

3 New Order

Restless

A beguiling light keyboard sprinkle leads you into New Order's first single from *Music Complete*, their first new album 'proper' in 10 years. The track is a rumination on the greed culture of our times, our consumerist excesses challenged by Bernard Sumner's simple questioning: "How much do you need?" Meanwhile, the accompanying video – created by Spanish film-makers NYSU – updates the Arthurian legend of Excalibur and transposes it into the twilight world of hedonistic club culture.

SONGHOY BLUES
MUSIC IN EXILE

4 Songhoy Blues

Soubour

Free-rolling Mailian four-piece Songhoy Blues introduced themselves to a global audience via this track which also opens their groove-filled debut album, *Music In Exile*. The track itself also features longtime SB champion, Damon Albarn. "Damon heard what we were doing and he took the track to his studio in London and added a really massive backing vocal to it and a few other touches," says frontman Aliou Touré. "We've had some very exciting exchanges of ideas."

MATTHEW E. WHITE

9 Matthew E. White

Rock & Roll Is Cold

The opening tune on Matthew E. White's second album sees the Virginian songwriter create a freewheeling, Southern soul vibe, his warm, honeyed vocals perfectly framed by female backing vocals and subtle brass parts. A keen musical scholar, White takes stock of various genres – rock'n'roll, R&B, soul and gospel. His conclusion is simple enough: "Gospel licks are gifts."

SUFJAN STEVENS
CARRIE & LOWELL

10 Sufjan Stevens

Should Have Known Better

Based on the memories of his stepfather and his mother (who passed away in 2012), Sufjan Stevens's *Carrie & Lowell* album masks raw emotion behind a set of remarkable melodies. Should Have Known Better is a fine example, childhood experiences forming the basis of a lyric where loss appears to also lead to "illumination" (to use a direct lyrical reference). Celestial backing vocals add a soaring quality to a piece of music that manages to sound both intimate and yet sumptuous.

11 Father John Misty

Bored In The USA

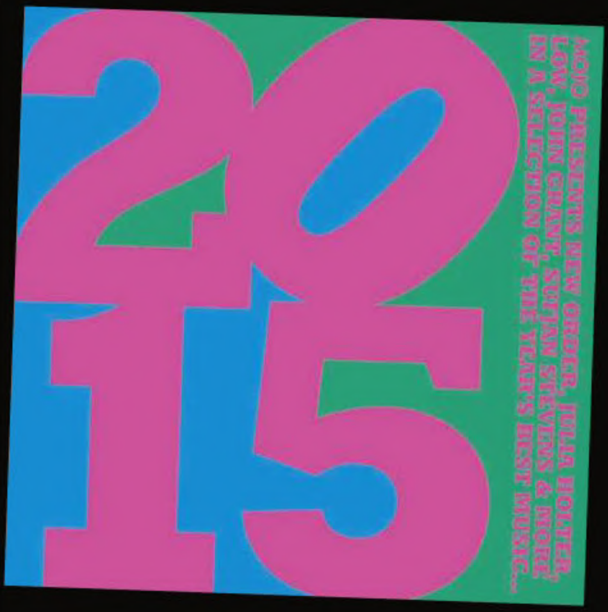
A caustic commentator on the modern world, both on record and on social media, Father John Misty takes no prisoners on this biting track whose title echoes that of The Boss's eternal anthem. Misty, aka Josh Tillman, has an impressive range of targets – the education system, the religiously bigoted ("save me white Jesus!") and personal finance companies among them – the track's protagonist being trapped in a materialistic vortex of his own making.

12 Low

What Part Of Me

Eleven albums in to their career and Minnesota outfit Low continue to make music that still sounds utterly enthralling. Recorded at Justin Vernon's April Base Studios, this track – released as a taster for the *One And Sixes* album in August – is actually another tune that packs an instantly memorable melody, and wraps a layer of fuzzy guitars around it. It's a tune that sounds good anywhere, any place, anytime.

ONCE AGAIN IT HAS BEEN A YEAR FILLED WITH glorious music. Whittling down the best of a bumper crop hasn't been easy but, having asked MOJO's vast array of contributors, we've managed to get the job done. The results appear on page 53 of this issue. From that Top 50 run down we've also managed to compile this exclusive collection to bring you MOJO's *Best Of 2015*. We hope you'll find tracks on here that will be new to you and some which are old friends. Indeed, we invite you to lose yourself in this unique compilation where we hope you'll discover a collection of music that you can truly believe in…


2015
MOJO PRESENTS NEW ORDER, JULIA HOLTER, LOW, JOHN GRANT, SUFJAN STEVENS & MORE IN A SELECTION OF THE YEAR'S BEST MUSIC…

MATADOR GAZ COOMBES

5 Gaz Coombes

20/20

A man who admits that The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* changed his life as he entered his teenage years, Gaz Coombes has also named the second track of his recent *Matador* album after the Californian outfit's 1969 album. Whether this is intentional or not remains a moot point, but the track is awash with fittingly beauteous harmonies. In fact, the spirit of The Beach Boys floods through *Matador* in a manner that is uplifting and inspired.

6 Bill Ryder-Jones

Two To Birkenhead

Few pop songs manage to exist without a chorus. Then again, few people write pop songs like West Kirby's Bill Ryder-Jones. For all its scuffed exterior and unconventional structure, Two To Birkenhead boasts irresistible pop hooks, underpinned by Teenage Fanclub-infused guitars and a set of localised lyrics that hint at heartbreak, near-collapse, as well as a dash of redemption.

7 Jim O'Rourke

Last Year

In the past 12 months we have been inundated with singer-songwriters who claim to have been inspired by the '70s avatars like Harry Nilsson, Randy Newman and Elton John. While they have toiled endlessly to replicate sounds from that decade, Jim O'Rourke has done so effortlessly, as is evident on this track which sounds like an instant modern classic. Familiar and yet fresh, its musical warmth and wry expressionism underlines the fact that you are listening to a master at play.

John Grant
GREY TICKLES, BLACK PRESSURE

8 John Grant

Down Here

Over the course of three albums John Grant has established his rich, observational writing style and augmented his original '70s-inspired sound with differing textures. Down Here illustrates this, the song's classicism overlaid by a sense of sonic adventurism which erupts at around 2.34 into the track. Lyrically, meanwhile, Grant tackles issues of mortality and societal constraint in a manner that mixes both humour and nihilism.

JULIA HOLTER
HAVE YOU IN MY WILDERNESS

13 Julia Holter

Feel You

Three years ago Julia Holter cut a cover of Fleetwood Mac's Gold Dust Woman for MOJO's *Rumours Revisited* covermount CD. Her version pointed to a poppier direction for an artist whose work had, up until then, been closer to art-rock. Her most recent LP, the masterful *Have You In My Wilderness*, sees Holter deliver on that direction and is MOJO's Album Of The Year as a result. Feel You typifies her singular approach and her broadening appeal.

JOANNA NEWSOM
DIVERS

14 Joanna Newsom

Leaving The City

"Breathe deep and equalise your today-ears to the new world of *Divers*…" proclaim Joanna Newsom's label, Drag City on her website, refusing to offer any further real pointers with regards to the Californian singer's fourth album. Leaving The City, however, is moment of rock-orientated accessibility which nevertheless retains her complex use of melody, as well as her adventurous approach to instrumentation. Put simply, the track offers the listener escapism on a number of very different levels.

JASON ISBELL
SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE

15 Jason Isbell

If It Takes A Lifetime

A member of Southern rockers the Drive-By Truckers until 2007, Jason Isbell has since carved out his own independent path, latterly releasing records on his own Southeastern label. His latest, *Something More Than Free*, is a crowning triumph, entering both the UK and US Top 20. It Takes A Lifetime showcases Isbell's fine synthesis of rock, folk and country music. Read a full review of Jason Isbell's appearance at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium on page 118

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CHECK OUT THE VIDEO FOR MOJO'S BEST OF 2015 COMPILED EXCLUSIVELY AT WWW.MOJO4MUSIC.COM

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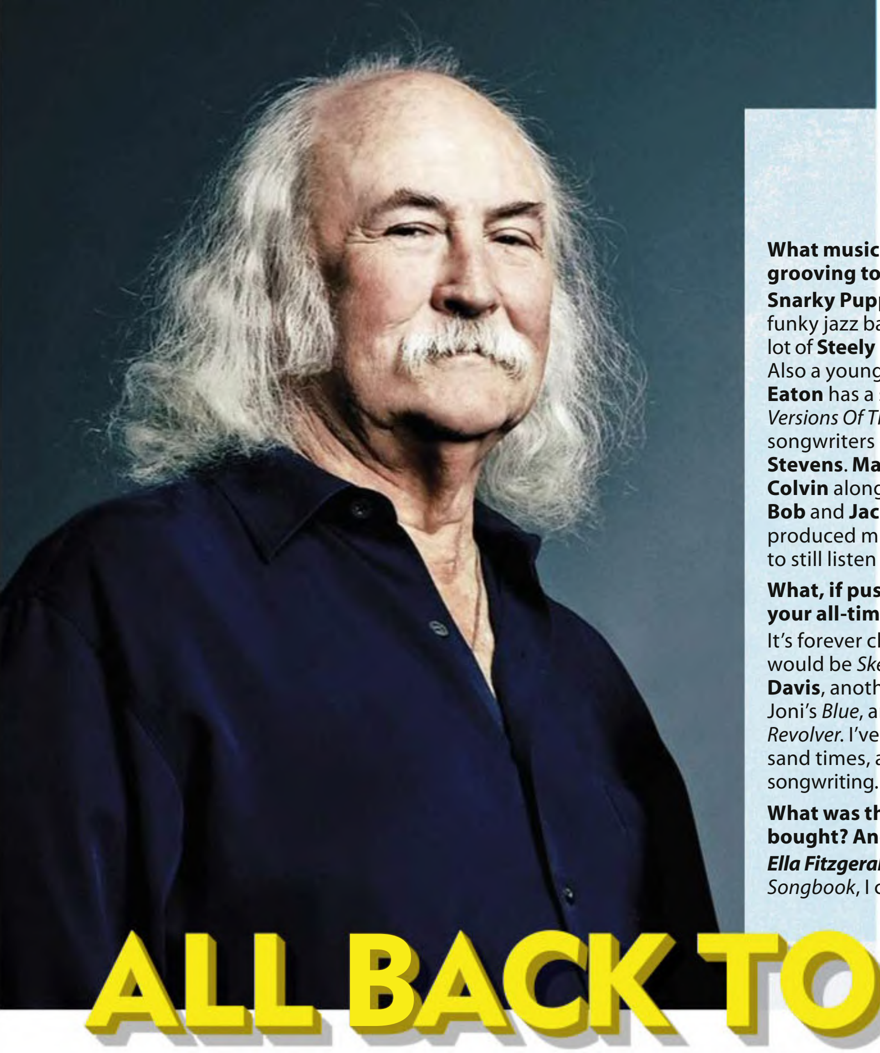
ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

IN WHICH THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...



DAVID CROSBY

BYRD IS THE WORD

What music are you currently grooving to?

Snarky Puppy, a pretty amazing funky jazz band, some classical and a lot of **Steely Dan** – my favourite band. Also a young singer called **Marcus Eaton** has a stunning new album, *Versions Of The Truth*. I love singer/songwriters – new artists like **Becca Stevens**. **Marc Cohn** and **Shawn Colvin** along with, of course, **Joni**, **Bob** and **Jackson Browne** who produced music that's too good not to still listen to – like **The Beatles**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

It's forever changing. One week it would be *Sketches Of Spain* by **Miles Davis**, another week it would be Joni's *Blue*, another week it would be *Revolver*. I've listened to *Aja* a thousand times, and *Gaucho*. Fantastic songwriting. Steely Dan are amazing.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Ella Fitzgerald *Sings The Duke Ellington Songbook*, I can't remember where.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Paul McCartney maybe. Brilliant writer, brave writer. Nobody else had the balls to write Eleanor Rigby, a very human song. But honestly, I've always liked being me.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't, because I get to do it everywhere else. Besides, I'm too busy washing my ancient white hair.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

How's that different from a Friday night record? Saturday nights are like any other nights for me. My life is pretty much a party at all times! I'm a very happy guy, my family are very tight. I'm having a blast.

And your Sunday morning record?

When I was growing up, there was a radio programme in the '40s and '50s that played classical music every Sunday morning. We never missed it. I still listen to classical. I'm usually asleep anyway. Soundly.

CROSBY STILLS & NASH SPECIAL

Stephen Stills

THE ONE YOU'RE WITH

What music are you currently grooving to?

Silence after a show.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

The Complete Blackhawk Sessions by **Miles Davis**, which was recorded live in 1961 at the Blackhawk in San Francisco.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

My Babe by **Little Walter**, or was it Fever by **Little Willie John**? Or it could've been **Bo Diddley**'s first album, with Who Do You Love and Diddy Wah Diddy. Not sure, and not sure where from. Must've been the late '50s.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

There's a good many I'd like to play like, but I'd keep my own life. Mind you, **McCartney**'s money wouldn't hurt.

What do you sing in the shower?

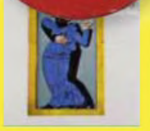
Whatever I was dreaming about last night, if I can remember it!

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

My life doesn't work like that. Saturday night I usually tuck in to a good book or find a film or fiddle with something I'm writing and tape it if it's new. If I'm on the road, I wonder what the hell I'm doing still out there.

And your Sunday morning record?

Again, my life doesn't work like that. Proof read what I've written the night before, take a red pencil to it, make notes in the margins. Make breakfast. Read the Times, watch the news and NFL Football. Mind the lads don't get Mummy all wound up. Think of something fun to do with them. Or run to the golf course and take in a quick nine with my youngest son Oliver before it gets too busy. He's 10 now and sometimes lets me win. If I'm on the road, I'll go back to sleep or pack. So, no Sunday morning record.



NOW PLAYING

- Croz has listened to Steely Dan masterworks like 1980's *Gaucho* a thousand times but still can't get enough. Well, it has got Glamour Profession on it.
- Stephen Stills' first record – possibly – was Bo Diddley's mighty 1958 debut. Who Do You Love, it demanded.
- Lancashire teddy boy Graham Nash's first shellac, on the other hand, was Gene Vincent's 1956 rock'n'roll classic Be-Bop-A-Lula.

Graham Nash

ALL BACK TO OUR HOUSE

What music are you currently grooving to?

Nothing. I'm in the middle of writing and recording 20 songs for a new solo record and I have no room for anybody else's. For the last 10 years. I've been involved in 11 CDs and four box sets [of CSN and CSNY], so I get completely immersed in those.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I've got four: *Revolver*, *Sgt. Pepper*, *Pet Sounds* and *The Music Of Bulgaria*, the greatest harmony record ever. It was recorded in 1955 in Paris by the Bulgarian State Choir [**Ensemble Of The Bulgarian Republic**], women from the fields and mountains who do seven-part harmonies. Paul Simon gave me a copy in 1966 in New York. I've bought several hundred to give away.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Be-Bop-A-Lula by **Gene Vincent**, in Salford. One of the greatest records ever made. It was the reason I joined Capitol Records after my dispute with Columbia. I told them, We'll get all the financial shit worked out, and if you let me in your studio with Gene Vincent's 2-track master of Be-Bop-A-Lula, I'm yours. And they did. In retrospect, as a producer I would never have passed that precious tape over the heads of a tape machine one more time, but I did it.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

No one.

What do you sing in the shower?

The song I happen to be working on at the time. My head is like this strange conveyer belt – a verse here, a chorus there, a lyric here, an idea for making a record there, all churning away.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

You Can't Always Get What You Want by the **Stones**.

And your Sunday morning record?

Samuel Barber's Adagio For Strings.

Crosby, Stills & Nash were interviewed while on a transatlantic cruise aboard the Queen Mary 2.

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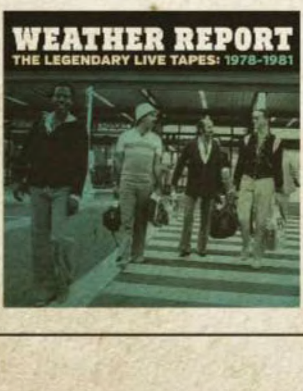

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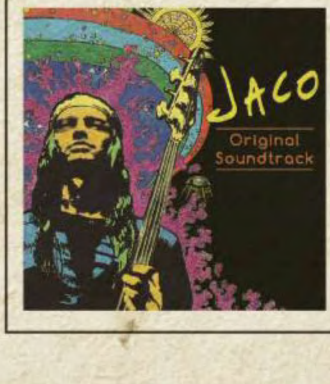

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"A BOWIE ALBUM IS AS COMPLICATED AS the galaxy we live in." So says producer Tony Visconti as, this month, he joins our sizeable DB celebration and provides MOJO with an exclusive guided tour of one of the most fascinating and enthralling albums of 2015. The lazy shorthand for *Blackstar* could easily read: 'David Bowie does jazz'. This, however, would be a facile view that does David's latest work a gross disservice. The title track – which clocks in at nine minutes and 57 seconds and will have been rather audaciously released as a single by the time you read this – should tell you that Bowie's latest reinvention is almost genre-less in form, and exhilarating in impact. Indeed, *Blackstar* is another highlight in a year that has been full of great music – a point borne out by the CD that accompanies this month's issue, and the accompanying review of 2015. We thank you for your continued support during the last 12 months, and we look forward to ushering in 2016 in your company with our next issue on December 29. Until then…

Phil

PHIL ALEXANDER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I've been reading your book… No, I tell a lie

(Panama) hats off to Sylvie Simmons, who got more out of Elvis Costello than anyone I can remember in MOJO 265. I loved the comparison of the Stiff Tour inmates with Hogan's Heroes – and her interview was all the better for the occasional controlled outbreak of classic Costello prickle, like when Sylvie asked about the "density" of some of his songs. Maybe at long last he's learned to be nice to a lady. Will I invest in Costello's ponderously titled doorstop – Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink? Maybe now, thanks to Sylvie Simmons and MOJO, I don't have to.

Wellington Gelignite, via e-mail

No ice

Having listened to the Elvis Costello CD given away with MOJO 265, I was wondering if you could do me a favour next time you bump into Elvis and remind him never to invite me to a party round at his place? Much obliged. PS: I am still playing (and loving) your *Roots Of Fleetwood Mac* CD on repeat play, so I'm not a complete musical ignoramus. Sorry Elvis, nothing personal.

Peter George, Derbyshire

This means good cheer

Does anyone have the same problem? Valiantly trying to defend the genius of The Beatles while increasingly being faced by a "they weren't really all that and as for McCartney, well…" wave of negativity. So how refreshingly useful to read MOJO 264's '"FAB1s Beatles On Top!" feature. All I need to do now is photocopy, e-mail PDFs and generally rave about Phil Sutcliffe's description of their first few singles. A tad younger than Phil, I recall my wonderment as I discovered The Beatles myself as a nine-year-old. I can pay no higher compliment than to say MOJO 264 was almost akin to discovering The Beatles all over again for the first time.

David Roberts, via e-mail

Are you making a pass at me?

When I see The Beatles on the cover of MOJO I always laugh because I know it annoys some people, while filling me with the same unfettered joy that has accompanied me since I was a child. I was born in 1955 in a cold black and white and rather austere West of Scotland. Authority and school a struggle at best until these four guys came along. Their music was brilliant: "yeah, yeah, yeah" made total sense to an eight-year-old and John Lennon singing "twist and shout" was terrifying, exciting and a revelation to hear that kind of overt expression. They were witty, funny and highly intelligent and totally reinvented how to engage with the media, In short they brought the sun out. I was particularly touched to read Paul McCartney's quote in MOJO 264 that John Lennon was his hero, as he was mine. They came, gave us their best, moved on and were still brilliant but ➢

≺ that initial blast of joy and sunshine will sustain this boy forever. I know that every generation has an attachment to their formative music but they transcend their era and ignoring them is simply to miss out or an affected stance. Long may you publish articles about them.

Laurence Freel, via e-mail

The hunger knows no reason

So it might be an age thing. I have religiously bought your magazine every month since issue one. And, by and large, you entertain, inform and educate and life is always a little bit nicer at the end of the month. But (and memory has been sharpened by a recent release) I feel that there is a story to be told. Come on down Terry Bickers. This man has been involved in some of the greatest music of the past and present century and yet remains misunderstood and underappreciated. Having finally got the glorious *Meanwhile Gardens* by Levitation, surely Terry is worthy of a feature, an appraisal? House Of Love… Cradle… the man has been involved in some interesting projects and truly great bands… But perhaps has never lived up to his potential? But… Levitation were something special. They swam against the tide. They did their own thing. They were outstanding live… A force of nature. Terry Bickers – in a parallel universe – would be a musical deity… A Syd or a Skip or an Arthur… He deserves some credit… And it's one hell of a story… How about it? I'll gladly take it on!

Andy McKay, via e-mail

That's right

In MOJO 265's Time Machine, the photo of Tennessee Ernie Ford being accompanied by Mickey Rooney also included George Gobel on guitar. I don't know if Rooney played bass but Gobel, best known as a comedian, did play guitar and began his career as a country singer. Gobel was about as well known as Tennessee Ernie, and Ernie guested on Gobel's television show.

Dave Howell, via e-mail

Longevity… longevity

Just read the new issue and what unexpected memories leaped out from the pages! Trader Horne's *Morning Way* reviewed in Reissues; a delightful album and still it upsets me that they didn't take to the stage at the Hollywood Music Festival. Also, the Phil Collins photo in Flaming Youth sent me downstairs to rediscover *Ark 2* (and be reminded why I haven't played it since 1969). Then, to top it all, MOJO '60s Vol. 4 advertised – made my day. Lovely.

R Kimble, Yorkshire

It's not the kind of thing that you forget

Hard to believe none of the first four albums by Baltimore's Lungfish cracked the Top 10 of MOJO 264's How To Buy on Dischord Records. A terrific band who had a truly original and gifted songwriter in Daniel Higgs. Only Minor Threat's first record was more deserving of the top slot. The rest of Dischord's roster (and scene in general) simply followed and never wavered from the path carved by Ian MacKaye. And DC's best band wasn't even on the Dischord label – that band was 9353.

Vic Matusak, Baltimore

Blood type, unageing

I'm not in the habit of questioning MOJO's judgement. I must, however, note that I was profoundly disappointed to not see Slow's *Against The Glass* included in MOJO 263's list of "noise classics from 1985". Not only was Slow the greatest band Canada ever unleashed on an unsuspecting music scene, but they may also have been the single greatest band in the history of rock'n'roll. Otherwise, a rather enjoyable trip down a noisy memory lane. Thank you for that.

Allan Wigney, Ottawa, ON

Is it a love song?

As a longtime MOJO reader I'm never disappointed by the array of talent you always seem to cover. Like MOJO, I've never boxed myself into one musical paradigm, and have always enjoyed alternative, prog, punk, metal, classic rock, country, etc. MOJO 263, with Patti Smith on the cover, did a nice job covering some punk classics from 1985 with "The Year Noise Broke!" In turn, the issue did a nice feature on one of my all-time favourites, David Gilmour. Thank you for that. Oh and since we're on the topic, David your new album is bullocks!! I'm glad you love your wife – and she is a beautiful woman – but whew, her lyrics are distractingly bad! Just sayin'.

Rick Evans, Simi Valley, California

What's that piece you're playing?

Lewis Merenstein, producer of *Astral Weeks*, has always denied that any of the unedited outtakes of the tracks exist. The current reissue seems to prove him right. There's no sign of the two unissued songs from the sessions that Morrison mentioned back in the 1970s, one about trains and the other about Jesse James.

Likewise, the 'full' version of Slim Slow Slider is nothing of the sort. Everyone at the session remembered the original take ending with a long, jazzy improvisation. Merenstein chopped this off for reason of space, leaving only a trace on the abrupt edit familiar to listeners ever since. The reissue doesn't reinstate that jam. Instead, we get a minor doodle for guitar and flute in the same key that goes nowhere in particular, and ends with Morrison praising the Almighty. Neither the instrumentation nor the lyric has anything to do with the main song. It seems simply a scrap of material in the same key, edited on to spice up the CD – or, bluntly, to get more money from a loyal fanbase.

Astral Weeks remains a glorious set of songs. But Morrison and his record company should have had Merenstein's honesty when reissuing it.

Martin Maw, via e-mail

Erratum

Re MOJO 265's Hello Goodbye interview with Iain Matthews: in the main image of Fairport Convention we credited Simon Nicol as Dave Pegg. We apologise for the mistake, and thanks to the readers who pointed it out.

STARDUST MEMORIES!

The previously unpublished carrot-top shot that's one of this issue's art prints comes courtesy of Mick Rock's beautiful Taschen book-in-a-box, **The Rise Of David Bowie 1972-1973** – featuring 50 per cent previously unseen views of Bowie's iconic, revolutionary Ziggy phase in a limited 1,972 run with a remarkable lenticular cover. For more information, visit taschen.com.

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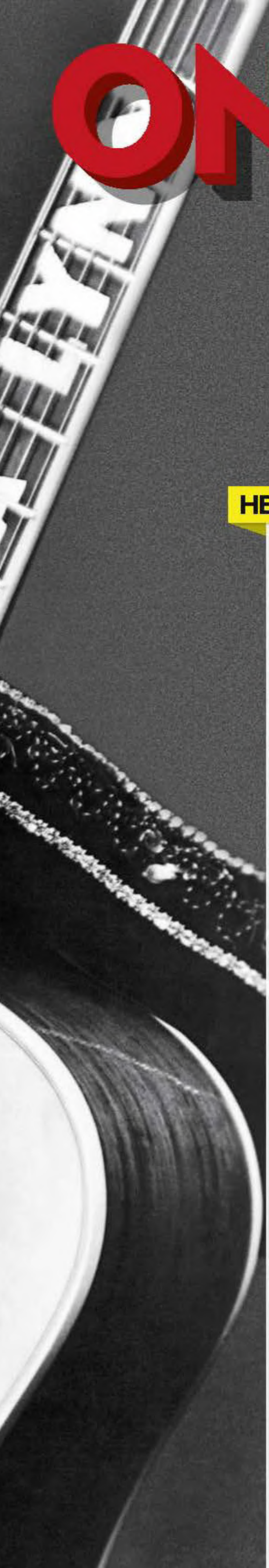

HELLOHONKYTONK

THE COALMINER'S DAUGHTER RETURNS

Country legend Loretta Lynn makes five new albums, reunites with the house of Johnny Cash and sings with Elvis Costello.

"I stayed out of the recording studio for a little while," says Loretta Lynn in an unhurried Kentucky drawl, "and then I've just been doing it, a little at a time." Working on new album *Full Circle*, that is – her first since *Van Lear Rose*, her celebrated Jack White collaboration 11 years ago that hoovered up half the Country Grammys. She's been recording in Johnny Cash's old log cabin studio in Hendersonville, Tennessee, which looks just as it did when Johnny and June left in 2003: stone steps, front porch, cosy fireplace and wooden walls hung with Native American art and old photos of The Carter Family.

"I come here because it's like home," she explains. "If you want to take a break you take a break, whatever you want to do." In this way she's cut enough songs for five albums, and is putting the finishing touches to the first, which is also the opener in a series of Cash Cabin Studio projects.

The producers are Lynn's daughter, Patsy Lynn Russell, and John Carter Cash, whom the 83-year-old country legend says she's "knowed since he was a baby. John [Sr] and June and I were real close – in fact they were some of the first people I worked with when I started singing. When I came to Nashville they took me on tour. June would have me take little Johnny while she was on-stage. Mother Maybelle [Carter] wanted to hire me to stay with her and sing with The Carter Family and I said, Mama, I've come to make it by myself. Within six months I had a hit record; she said, 'I'm glad you stayed true to your thoughts'."

Full Circle revisits some of her old songs, including a new version of Whispering Sea, "the first song I ever wrote. My husband was fishing and I was sitting way up in the top of a tree with my line in the water and I started singing (*sings*) 'Whispering Sea rolling by'." Loretta treats MOJO to a cappella versions of some old songs she's recorded for the first time, like the widely covered In The Pines. "My grandpa put it on one of those old Victrolas that you keep winding up and that's where I heard that song. I said to Johnny [Carter Cash], You don't want me to cut this, it's too old, and he said, 'That's why I want you to cut it'." Other tracks include Always On My Mind and I Never Will Marry.

Among the new songs is a co-write with Todd Snider (Everything It Takes) featuring a guest vocal by Elvis Costello. Another guest is Willie Nelson (Lay Me Down). "We hit Nashville at the same time and took tours together and oh, he was a handsome man! Brass-coloured hair and his eyes the same colour. I've always loved Willie."

Asked to sum up the album, due out on March 6, she says that's a question her fans keep asking. "I just say, Hey, won't that surprise you… I'm back – and still rolling!"

Sylvie Simmons

Kentucky reign: (main) Loretta Lynn in 1966 with her inlaid Gibson; (below) the singer in the studio; (bottom) getting her star on Nashville's Music City Walk Of Fame, with Jack White, June 4, 2015.

"I'M BACK – AND STILL ROLLING!"

BRANDS
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LORETTA LYNN

Getty Images (2)

CURRENTAFFAIRS

HELL OR HIGH WATER

All you ever needed to know about AC/DC's 1976 tour of Sweden! Plus, burning portaloos and leopard print vests.

"Angus Young is only 16 years old," declared Swedish newspaper Hallands Nyheter on July 16, 1976. "[He] plays with one hand, uses his teeth in order to make rock, rolls around on the stage floor and acts in such a way that the audience many times is rubbing their eyes." The occasion was AC/DC's first tour of Sweden, a five-gig expedition full of incongruity and hard rock action explored in considerable detail in the recently-published book AC/DC Love At First Feel: The Legendary AC/DC Tour Of Sweden 1976.

A collaboration between authors Anders Hedman and Mats Larsson, the book is an up-close view of a group whose breakthrough is yet to come, illustrated by copious eyewitness accounts plus newspaper clippings, copies of tour itineraries and other such ephemera. Having worked their way up from pubs to mid-sized venues in Britain, it reports, AC/DC's passage to Scandinavia was secured via a Musicians Union-mandated exchange when Abba wanted to play in Australia.

As a still largely-unknown group, however, the band's engagements would include a motorcycle meet at a racetrack, two rock clubs and two rural dancehalls with tiny stages, alongside gaudily clad showbands called Jigs and Bert Bennys, all frustrated by Sweden's stringent licensing laws. The recollections of witnesses often differ: memories of power cuts and on-stage mooning are disputed, for example, while crowd estimates at Anderstorp raceway on July 24 range from 150 to 4,000. More certain is the Värnamo Nyheter's review of the latter event, which reveals that a 'Pyromaniac On The Loose Burned Down The Outdoor Lavatory', and the universal acclaim for Angus's schoolboy outfit and Bon Scott's leopard print vest. Poignantly, Jigs guitarist Tryggve Johansson is quoted saying, "It feels pretty strange that we've sold a million records but we're known for having played with a band that's now huge… it really was a night you'd rather forget but it hasn't turned out that way."

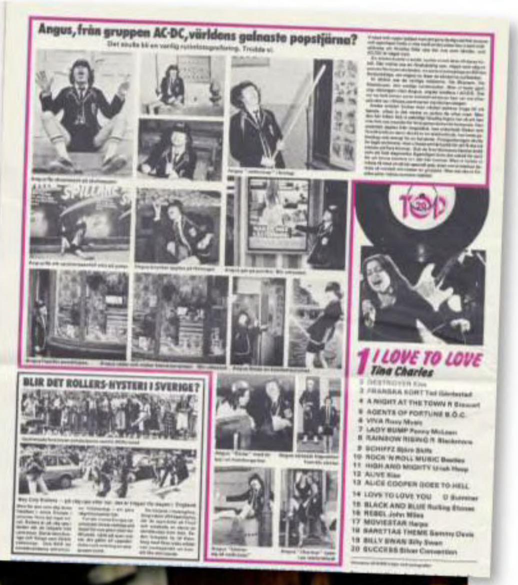
More boisterous is a photo feature of Angus Young capering around in Stockholm, shot for pop pin-up mag Poster when AC/DC were in town to play the Glädjehuset venue on July 21. Headlined 'The World's Craziest Pop Star?', the piece shows the guitarist stealing apples in the Hötorget street market, sat at a school desk in the Skansen museum and invading the window of a porn mag shop in the city's red light area. "Eventually we got thrown out," recalls photographer Hans Hartwig in the book. "Angus was quite uninhibited in his posing… like a punk." Special early editions of the book will have 12 photo prints of this sequence, including one signed by Hartwig.

Anders Hedman and Mats Larsson's AC/DC Love At First Feel: The Legendary AC/DC Tour Of Sweden 1976 is published by Premium Publishing.

> "ANGUS WAS QUITE UNINHIBITED IN HIS POSING… HE WAS LIKE A PUNK."
> Hans Hartwig

Nordic monkeying: (opposite) AC/DC's Angus Young at the Sergels Trog fountain, Stockholm, July 21, 1976; (below from left) badge of honour; Angus as film buff; Poster mag's photo feature.

I DO IT FOR
AC/DC


Angus, från gruppen AC-DC, världens galnaste popstjärna?

BLIR DET ROLLERS-HYSTERI I SVERIGE?

TOP 20

1 I LOVE TO LOVE Tina Charles
2 DESTROYER Kiss
3 FRAMSKA SORT Ted Gärdestad
4 A NIGHT AT THE TOWN R Stewart
5 AGENTS OF FORTUNE B.Ö.C.
6 VIVA Roxy Music
7 LADY BUMP Penny McLean
8 RAINBOW RISING R Blackmore
9 SCHIFFZ Björn Skifs
10 ROCK 'N ROLL MUSIC Beatles
11 HIGH AND MIGHTY Uriah Heep
12 ALIVE Kiss
13 ALICE COOPER GOES TO HELL
14 LOVE TO LOVE YOU D Summer
15 BLACK AND BLUE Rolling Stones
16 REBEL John Miles
17 MOVIESTAR Harpo
18 BARETTAS THEME Sammy Davis
19 BILLY SWAN Billy Swan
20 SUCCESS Silver Convention

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Photo: Hans Hartwig, ©Premium Rockshot www.rockshot.com

WHAT GOES ON!

Stick to the wax: (inset top left) Darryl Sheinman and mastering engineer Cicely Balston; (main) the Haeco Scully lathe at work.

NEEDLETIME

MOVIN' & GROOVIN'

With jazz and vinyl on the rise, might London outfit Gearbox be the future of the small record label?

Darrel Sheinman still remembers the night Gearbox Records was conceived. "I was watching N.E.R.D. at the Indigo O2," he remembers. "I thought, This sounds so much better than their records! I tried getting the rights to it but, of course, lawyers. So it didn't work, but I had an idea…"

That idea was a new record label, a hobby outlet for previously unreleased live recordings. However, when their first LP release, *BBC Jazz For Moderns*, a recording of a previously unreleased 1962 Tubby Hayes BBC session sold out, Sheinman reconsidered the scale of the project. "I thought, This kind of works."

Things have come a long way since then. In 2011, overseeing a vinyl reissue of the Jazz Jamaica All Stars' *Massive Vol. 1*, watching mastering engineer Ray Staff at work, Sheinman decided that it might be fun to run his own analogue studio. Buried round the back of a nondescript industrial estate near King's Cross, one flight up in a warren of concrete office-blocks, is a room that resembles a designer marriage of Mike Hammer's high-tech bachelor pad and a Decca recording studios, circa 1964, leather armchairs and polished wood occasional tables alongside vintage recording equipment like a Studer C37 valve ¼-inch tape machine and a vintage Haeco Scully cutting lathe.

A former punk and jazz drummer from a family of musicians, who has paid for Gearbox with money made in the arena of maritime security, Sheinman has, since 2009, released previously unavailable recordings by such legendary British and American jazz artists as Michael Garrick, Joe Harriott and Mark Murphy, while quietly expanding his roster to include contemporary artists such as Kate Tempest, Emily Barker and outstanding young London jazz duo, Binker And Moses. In that time, he has also watched his ludicrously unfashionable set-up – a high-end vinyl-only record label specialising in jazz – become quietly *au courant*. The Gearbox offices have become the site of regular ultra-hip Jazz Kissaten sessions where, in a throwback to Tokyo's jazz cafes of the '60s, punters sip high-end whisky and listen to Gearbox's collection of original Blue Note 1500 series LPs. Meanwhile, vinyl continues to undergo a revival, and jazz – in the shape of Kamasi Washington, Kendrick Lamar and even the new David Bowie album – is back in the mainstream.

Sheinman also insists that the Gearbox model could become the workable cottage-industry standard for other small labels. "Major labels are in chaos," he says. "They've shed pressing plants, mastering studios, so let's start building proper old labels again."

Now with a marketing manager, former Sony Music director of jazz Adam Sieff, Gearbox are moving into a more competitive arena, albeit one untainted by the mass market. "We don't subscribe to the traditional pile-'em-high sell-'em-cheap model," says Sieff. "It's not about quantity. Our ingredients have not been diluted for mass consumption. The majors might think that if it's round, black, flat, 12-inches, then it doesn't matter if it was mastered badly from an MP3. We think all the details are important."

Gearbox plans for 2016 include their own budget turntable, an EP release of Nico's haunting 1971 BBC session, and a new joint venture label, Live At Ronnie Scott's, that could see vintage recordings by Sonny Rollins, Yusef Lateef, Roland Kirk and Freddie Hubbard making their vinyl debut.

"Jack White has got it right," concludes Sheinman. "He's passionate, he does things nicely and he's got his product out there quickly. That's a good standard to follow."

Andrew Male

FAB, GEARBOX

Three essential releases.

PRELUDE TO HEART IS A LOTUS

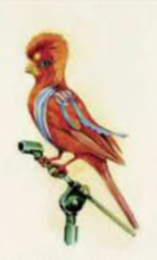
- **Michael Garrick Sextet** *Prelude To Heart Is A Lotus* (GEARBOX, 2013) A 1968 BBC radio recording, this is British jazz at its most lyrical, melodic and haunting.

DEM ONES
BINKER AND MOSES

- **Binker And Moses** *Dem Ones* (GEARBOX, 2015) London tenor-and-drums two-piece move from urban precision to swirling Eastern spirituality.

- **Nico** *1971 BBC Session* (GEARBOX, 2016) Recorded for a 1971 Peel session, this is Nico at her most desolate and beautiful. Superbly mastered and deliciously chilling.

MOJO DIARY



DECEMBER 1

Drawn In Stereo, a book of artist Michael Gillette's pop-infused paintwork for **Beck**, **Elastica**, **My Morning Jacket**, **Saint Etienne** and others, plus illustrations for magazines including MOJO, gets its official release through AMMO books. Also included, the above image of **David Bowie** as an avian 'Stardust Warbler'! See michaelgillette.com.

DECEMBER 20

What could be more festive than the **Hawkwind** and **Steve Hillage** Christmas Solstice Party at the Shepherd's Bush Empire? Not much. As well as Steve playing with Hawkwind (above Commander Brock), his techno group **System 7** will be supporting. There'll also be a warm-up do at the Southampton 1865 – not the year – on December 19.

Classic Blues Artwork from the 1920's
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DECEMBER 31

If you're needing a new calendar, now's zero hour. And if you don't fancy pictures of natural beauty, cars or dogs with human teeth, the 2016 Classic Blues Artwork From The 1920s is an ideal alternative. Featuring rare press ads for 78s by **Ma Rainey**, **Spark Plug Smith** and others, it comes with a deluxe audio CD of 78s transferred using original 1930s equipment. More info: www.bluesimages.com

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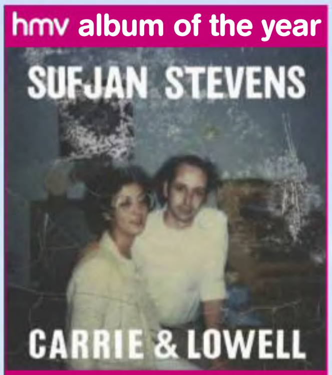
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CARRIE & LOWELL

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Beach House
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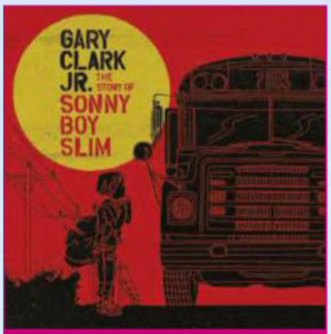
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I Love You, Honeybear

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WHAT GOES ON!

MOJOWORKING

UNDERWORLD

After Frankenstein and the Olympics, Hyde and Smith seek renewal in the random and spontaneous.

Subterranean home sick crew: Rick Smith (left) and Karl Hyde at work in the Pigshed, Essex, October 2015.

"It's been a while since we last made an Underworld record," says Rick Smith. "2009, was it?"

"No…" quips his long-time foil Karl Hyde. "1809."

These multifaceted electronic veterans have not been idle, though. Since their last album proper, *Barking*, came out in 2010, they've soundtracked Danny Boyle's stage production of Frankenstein in 2011, worked on the London Olympics' opening ceremony in 2012, and also recorded apart. But it was the 20th anniversary reissue of their 1994 breakthrough *dubnobasswithmyheadman* album and recreating it live that engendered new creation.

"It was the most enjoyable tour I've ever been on," says Hyde. "The buzz off of that brought to life something that was carried on, I think, in the making of this record."

Work began in summer 2014 in Essex, in the band's studio/rehearsal space Pigshed and Smith's more intimate set up. "The word we've used [for the process] is 'games'," says Smith. "We'd basically start a fresh thing every day. What revealed itself very quickly was, if Karl and I were going to write together, I needed to capture his raw energy, and my own, more than we'd done for a very, very long time, possibly ever. You know, so often things are tweaked and massage'd and committee'd to death, and this seemed like a good idea to unearth gems and let them breathe."

> "I NEEDED TO CAPTURE KARL'S RAW ENERGY, AND MY OWN, MORE THAN WE'D DONE FOR A VERY, VERY LONG TIME, POSSIBLY EVER."
>
> **Rick Smith**

Hyde recalls spending an hour every morning writing in a nearby cafe. "Then I'd come back in and be prepared to throw it all away, and pick up a piece of paper that had something written on it that Rick had written the night before, and go, There's the opening line, maybe we can now go to page 42 of that notebook, you know? It really did feel like we were in a conversation that was rolling every day. And, Let's not repeat what we did yesterday, just because it worked. It's not a loss to discard something, it's important to have experienced it because it's what brings us to the next thing. Our mediocrity and failure throughout the '80s gave us the courage to not do things, and gave Rick the confidence and focus to create a band called Underworld."

Hyde says he was amazed at how quickly the LP came together – it was recorded in less than a year and their working model put less pressure on Smith than usual to assemble a cohesive album from studio recordings. Of 30 or 40 pieces recorded, final choices include the heavy-weight, galvanised If Rah, which finds Hyde freeforming about the symbolism of numbers and chanting "lunar lunar lunar lunar", techno orchestral cityscape Low Burn, and the bliss-pop of Nylon Strung. Smith is full of praise for the "fantastic flavours" added by Cardiff drum'n'bass producer Lincoln Barrett, aka High Contrast. "He's a ferocious talent, and he stopped me being sat in a techno shed in the dark on my own losing the plot."

"What's come off the back of it is, we're going to go back in and carry on writing," says Hyde. "That's testament to the process, I think."

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

Title: *Barbara Barbara, we face a shining future*

Due: March 2016

Producer: Rick Smith with assistance from Lincoln Barrett

Songs: If Rah / Low Burn / Blue / Nylon Strung

The Buzz: "What I'd hoped for was that it'd sound *more* like Underworld than any other record we'd made, and there was great joy as it unfolded. It's probably the happiest I've been about a record, probably ever."

Rick Smith

ALSOWORKING

…**BAABA MAAL**'s new album *The Traveller* arrives in January. Produced in Senegal and London over the last two years by Johan Hugo of The Very Best, it blends electronics with West African styles. "This is a new concept," he says. "My last album *Television* was already electronic, and I wanted to push it further. But it is still me my voice is my identity. Wherever you travel you have to be yourself"… 17 years since *Munki* and eight since the idea of new recordings was first floated, **Jim Reid** (left) has said **THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN** have begun their new album. A more "mature sound" is promised, unless touring *Psychocandy* provokes a return to feedback … **JOHNNY MARR** is already thinking about his third solo album. "I've got some new songs that I kicked around on our winter tour," he says. "One's called My Monster, which is me trying to hopefully write perfect powerpop, and the other's called Spiral Cities, that's more of a beautiful arena rock song"… **GANG STARR**'s **DJ Premier** has announced plans for his debut solo album *Last Session At 320*, which will feature **Dr. Dre**, **Christina Aguilera**, **Nas**, **Snoop Dogg** and **Ed Sheeran**… speaking on the guitcast.com podcast, **DEEP PURPLE** guitarist **Steve Morse** confirmed the hard rock lifers will begin their twentieth album in January with producer Bob Ezrin… **MISSY ELLIOTT** (left) has a new, Pharrell-augmented track, WTF (Where They From), out now. Could it be a taster for her long-promised seventh solo long player?…

Perou, Getty Images (2)

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Julia Holter
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SLEAFORD MODS

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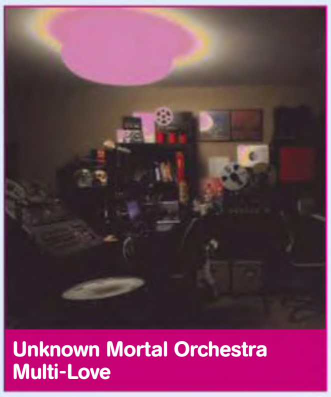

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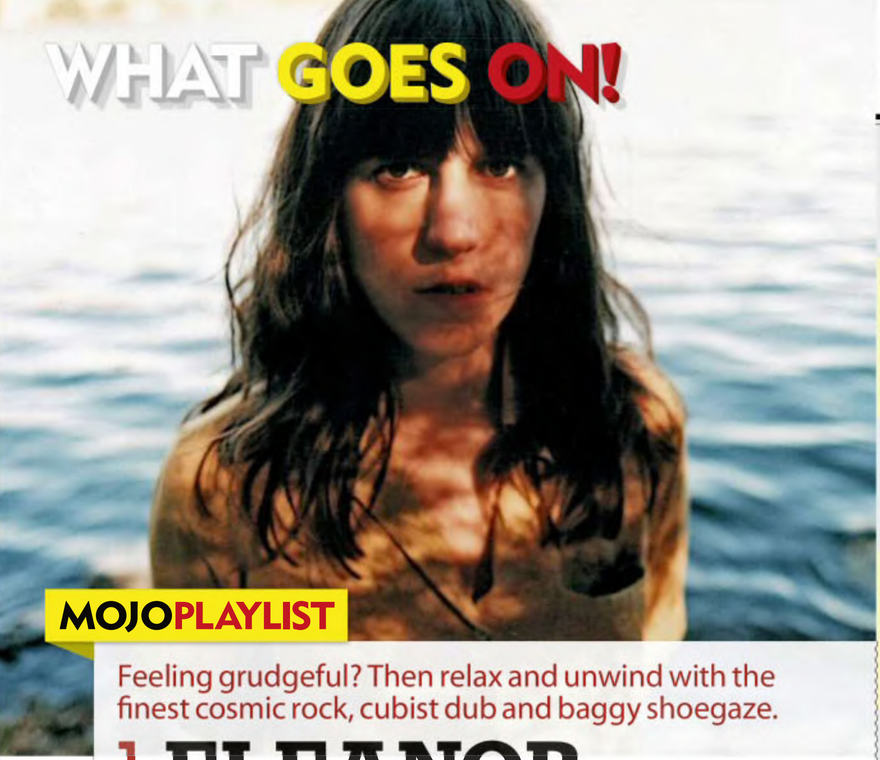
WHAT GOES ON!



MOJO PLAYLIST

Feeling grudgeful? Then relax and unwind with the finest cosmic rock, cubist dub and baggy shoegaze.

1 ELEANOR FRIEDBERGER

HE DIDN'T MENTION HIS MOTHER

With a touch of Knocking On Heaven's Door, Friedberger's in sweetly melancholy mood, ruefully recalling an oblique encounter and its lasting effects. "Today I'm frozen but tomorrow I'll write about you," she confides. "I so wanted something to happen that day, and then what I wanted, it happened." The title doesn't appear in the song, but the question remains, *why* didn't the unidentified dude mention his mother? And should he have? Maybe we'll find out on the forthcoming album *New View*, out in January.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

Uncomfortably mum: (above) Eleanor Friedberger rises from the waves; (below) the Dap-Kings' vocalist in Christmas mood.

2 NEW ORDER TUTTI FRUTTI EXTENDED 12-INCH MIX

New Order returning to their dancefloor roots? A very good idea, as the husky Italian playboy voiceover beckons you to the beachside Mediterranean club and Bernard Sumner observes, "life is so crazy these days."

Find it: *YouTube*

3 ALTERNATIVE TV ACTION TIME VISION

Conflicted yet fearless, Mark P's band's fourth single is up there with Subway Sect's Ambition or Television's Little Johnny Jewel as non-conforming punk-era brilliance. Get a full brain-load with Cherry Red's new four-disc box *Viva La Rock'n'Roll*.

Find it: *YouTube*

4 DENNIS BOVELL EYE WATER

From the dub sorcerer's newie *Dub 4 Daze*, this would simply be a trad tale of heartbroken weeping, were it not for the exhilarating cubist, 3-D sound manipulation and heavy roots reverberations.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

5 THE CULT DARK ENERGY

Astbury and Duffy come back strong with a tribal/Bolanistic rocker that touches on the origins of the creation of the universe, revolution and nihilism. Somewhat like Evil Woman by ELO.

Find it: *Spotify*

6 SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS AIN'T NO CHIMNEYS IN THE PROJECTS

The best new old soul revue in the biz get Christmassy on new platter *It's A Holiday Soul Party*. Within, Ms Jones recalls how her mum preserved that vital Yule magic against the odds. Listen and remember to give thanks.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

"SHARON JONES PRESERVES YULE MAGIC AGAINST THE ODDS."

ROKSAN
MOJO listens to all its music on Roksan equipment

7 JOHNNY CASH A BOY NAMED SUE

An XY ancestor of Bowie's Sue, Johnny's Oedipal son of a mangy dog opens Cash's 1971 Danish TV set, on CD and 2-LP for US RSD.

Find it: *YouTube*

8 SELDA BA CAN ADALETIN BU MU DÜNYA?

The Turkish protest singer who's been sampled by Dr. Dre and Mos Def, caught live in Utrecht on the album *Live At Le Guess Who? 2014*.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

9 FORMATION LOVE

Loose but tight liquid funk from south London duo whose half-melted guitar groove is distantly related to Mac DeMarco's *Another One*. Their Under The Tracks EP is out in November 27.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

10 CONGO NATTY REVOLUTION IN DUB (DJ MADD REMIX)

From the bass music veteran's new *Jungle Revolution In Dub*, a transformation of the fiery 2013 call to demolish Babylon by the Hungarian-born producer.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

11 GRIMES VENUS FLY FEAT. JANELLE MONÁE

The ultimate sci-fi chipmunk tag-team come together over martial beat-propelled techno, with heart-in-mouth breakdowns and oh, everything. From Grimes's new album *Art Angels*.

Find it: *Art Angels* (XL)/*Spotify*

12 HAROLD MELVIN & THE BLUENOTES THE LOVE I LOST

From 1973, the immaculately-suited up Philly soul stars and Gamble & Huff make a heartsick ballad into a transcendent, soaring thing, with Teddy Pendergrass on typically scorching form.

Find it: *YouTube*

13 IRMIN SCHMIDT WHY NOT

It's the Can man in orchestral guise, with a noir theme for unknown cities, and a touch of The Ipcress File. From his 12-CD box set release, *Electro Violet*.

Find it: *YouTube*

14 LUSH SWEETNESS AND LIGHT (THE ORANGE SQUASH MIX)

Where Kevin Shields gets the thirsty shoegazers' 1990 track and re-tools with baggier beats, near-peristalsis-like wave forms and palpable bass frequencies. If only he'd done more with them.

Find it: *Chorus box set* (4AD)

15 TORTOISE GESCEAP

From the Chicago post-rock entity's new LP *The Catastrophist*, murmuring synth tones and backwards drum beats interlock in multi-directional, endless Escher walkways of the mind.

Find it: *YouTube*

16 BILL NELSON BANAL

Stirringly odd prog/new wave/glam song of being bored to tears from the Be-Bop Deluxe man's '81 solo album *Quit Dreaming And Get On The Beam*.

Find it: *YouTube*

17 FUFANU YOUR COLLECTION (NICK ZINNER REMIX)

Icelanders make fractured, midnight sun rock'n'roll. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs' guitarist turns up the strobes.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

18 SWEET TOOTH T COWBOYS AND GANGSTERS (GREG WILSON & PEZA INSTRUMENTAL MIX)

Out on DJ Wilson's Super Weird Substance label, a stripped chunk of '70s funk, suitable for disco dancing in evening dress.

Find it: *Soundcloud*

19 MATMOS ABSOLUTE CARE II EXCERPT EIGHT

An LP made from washing machine noises? Yes: rhythmic and inhuman, this is the sound of kitchen appliances whooping it up when you're not there.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

20 UNITED STATES OF AUDIO PLAY IT ALL BACK

Like the Bristol DJ's docu-mix of The KLF (see MOJO Playlist 261), here's Tackhead mashed into an hour of beats, bass and blissful noise.

Find it: *SoundCloud*

SELFPORTRAIT

BILLY GIBBONS

ZZ Top's guitar in his own words and by his own hand.

I describe myself as… wow, man… fast and skinny. And, straight ahead. And right now, my mind is wandering.

Music changed me… pretty early. I remember going with my mom and my young sister to see Elvis Presley, when I was five, performing in Houston, Texas. He just tore it up and I just knew that music was for me.

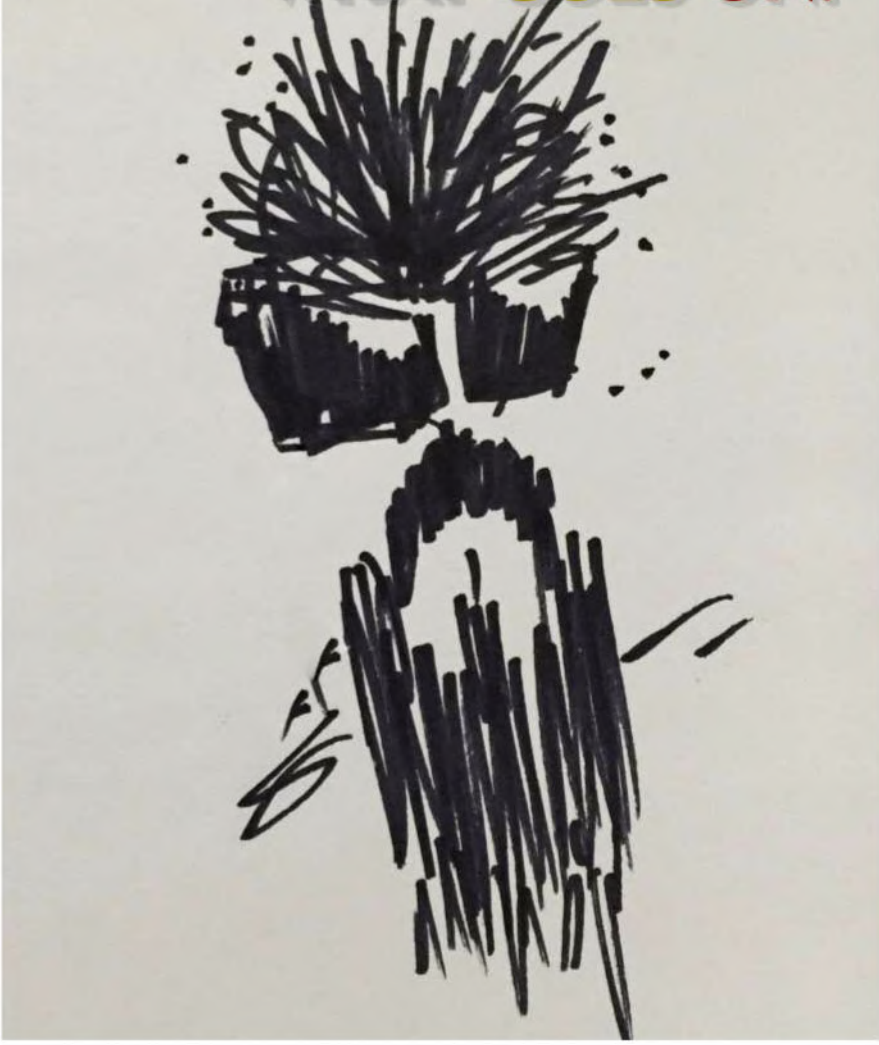
When I'm not making music… I wander the urban sprawl of Los Angeles, which is like going from town to town, connected. You could explore it for the rest of your life and still not see everything. Yesterday I joined a friend to go on one of our excursions, we'll pick a neighbourhood we don't know, it could be a quest for a new restaurant, but yesterday a brightly coloured building crossed our vision – an art installation. We set out with 30 minutes in mind and stayed for six hours.

My biggest vice is… Oh boy. Spending, in the way of African art. Why the fixation? I draw a parallel with blues music, and how it has a certain African retention.

The last time I was embarrassed was… this is a rather recent peculiarity, but I have found I have a bodily twitch, a physical movement, when thinking of some of the stunts we've pulled over the years, if they're not particularly pleasant. But I don't suffer from embarrassment in my daily life.

My formal qualifications are… I did a couple of years at the University Of Texas studying art, but slowly but surely the guitar pulled me away to the school of hard knocks, out on the road. I didn't graduate. But the styling behind the band's image making has a formal structure, though I've never had training, it's just come naturally.

The last time I cried was… the day before yesterday. I was listening to Clair De Lune by Debussy, performed by the French guitarist Ida Presti. Man, it was so moving.



Sharp sketched man: Billy Gibbons by Billy Gibbons.

> "THE GLASS IS HALF EMPTY - I'VE DRUNK IT, AND I'M FEELING THE EFFECTS."

Vinyl, CD or MP3… I appreciate all of them. I speak highly of the sudden return of vinyl though. I have a friend who resides in San Francisco, he and his lovely wife are avid music buffs and I was very taken and struck by his rather unusual turntable. The needle is laser guided. We listened to jazz organ – Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff.

My most treasured possession is… I would say my lovely bride! She's standing next to me. And she owns me too, it's a two way street.

The best book I've read is… Hardboiled Wonderland… by Murakami.It's a surrealistic walk through strange and unusual world. I think of individuals that lapse into not finding fields of charm as they walk through this world, and it must be so boring.

Is the glass half-full or half-empty… half empty, I'd say. I've drunk it, oh yeah, and I'm feeling the effects today.

My greatest regret is… I don't have any big regrets, but I think the greatest regret is to not have followed curiosity. It brings me to the harsh reality that our time on this planet is so limited it's impossible to do everything.

When we die… it's anybody's guess! In fact the discussion occurred in the studio just last week. We were thinking fondly of a friend who'd passed on, and someone said we just inhabit these bodies to see what it's all about. And then the engineer piped up, "hydrogen doesn't care about us". An obtuse view, but nobody's made it back to tell the tale, put it that way.

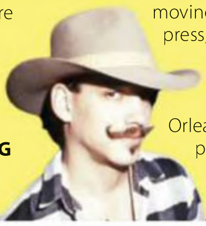
I would like to be remembered as… I would find it honourable to be thought of as that guy with the gravelly voice that knew how to love playing that guitar.

Ian Harrison

Billy's Perfectamundo is out now on UMC

MONDOMOJO

…**ERYKAH BADU** (below) did a one-woman show in Dallas at the end of October. Among Live Nudity's fully-clothed standup, music and improvisation, one segment saw her eat crisps, noisily, into the mike. Somebody sample it! …producer **James Gay-Rees** and director **Asif Kapadia**, who worked on the Amy documentary, are to make an **OASIS** film. Noel and Liam have both agreed to contribute, but will Garbo-like bassist **Guigsy** finally say his piece? …someone else going cinematic is **KANYE WEST**, who last month unveiled Yeezy Season 2 Film, a silent documentary on his fashion line. Speaking earlier to Vanity Fair on the subject, Kanye declared, "Sweatshirts are the way of the future" …… talk was rife in mid-October of a **HÜSKER DÜ** reunion after the band agreed a new merchandise website. But, said bassist **Greg Norton** (right), "Whoa, slow down everybody. We're just trying to sell a few T-shirts" …and good to hear **KEITH RICHARDS** join such castaways as **Dame Vera Lynn**, **Bert Weedon** and **JG Ballard** by appearing on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs in October. After playing **Chuck Berry** and **Gregory Isaacs**, Keith promised more from the Stones, asking, "Who's gonna jump off a moving bus?" …as MOJO went to press, we were saddened to learn of the death of **ALLEN TOUSSAINT**, the legendary New Orleans pianist, composer and producer, at the age of 77. A fuller appreciation will appear next month…



Photoshot, Ross Halfin

"It's not disturbing": Audience Of One holds no fears for Danger Mouse.

MINDBLOWERS!

DANGER MOUSE

Producer-without-borders Brian Burton savours post punk osbcuria, hippies dropping acid and bittersweet reggae.

darling ooh!
ERROL DUNKLEY

1 ERROL DUNKLEY
MOVIE STAR

(from Darling Ooh!, Gay Feet, 1972)

"I never knew he had hits in Britain in the '70s – I heard this in a café in Japan where they only play one style of music. It's like a '70s reggae thing, a little laid back, but he really goes for it, he's kind of like Horace Andy in some ways. The album all has a similar sound. This song, I live in Los Angeles and it reminds me of that whole movie star thing – it's saying it doesn't matter if you don't drive a big car, he loves you anyway. I had to get it on eBay."

SAD LOVERS & GIANTS
colourless dream

2 SAD LOVERS & GIANTS
COLOURLESS DREAMS

(Last Movement 7-inch, 1981)

"I know very little about this record but I just love it. It's an English post-punk new wave record I saw as an expensive 7-inch when I was record collecting in England years ago. It has this really big guitar intro and hooks, quite poppy – it reminds me of Modern English maybe, or the kind of thing you'd expect to be playing on the radio when you were growing up. I want to feel something when I listen to music, and this reminds me of a nostalgic time and place."

THE SHINS
NEW SLANG

3 THE SHINS
SPHAGNUM ESPLANADE

(from New Slang 7-inch, Sub Pop, 2001)

"I'd gone to see James Mercer play in Portland, after we'd done the Broken Bells album, and they played this song I'd never heard. I was totally flipping out. It's a B-side from one of the first singles The Shins put out, just gorgeous, easily one of my favourites of theirs, one of my favourite vocal melodies by anybody. It's an acoustic psychedelic song, sung in a really high voice. It's mysterious, I don't understand a lot of it, but I know pretty quick if I like something."

Terminal Love

4 PETER IVERS
AUDIENCE OF ONE

(from Terminal Love, Warners, 1974)

"He did that song In Heaven in the Eraserhead movie – 'The Lady In The Radiator Song'. He was involved with the National Lampoon, and came to Los Angeles to make it. He was a harmonica player and made this really good, whacky jazz album *Knight Of The Blue Communion* in 1969, but it didn't work out and he became locally famous presenting a new wave local access TV show in LA. In 1983 he was murdered, it was never solved – there's a great book about him. This song is so good, like something by Bowie. He has this high-pitched voice, it starts really dark before changing to a completely different song. I've listened a million times, it's not disturbing."

5 CHRYSALIS
APRIL GROVE

(from Definition, MGM, 1968)

They were a New York psychedelic band from '69/70 who only recorded one album, led by J. Spider Barbour. Zappa was meant to produce them but they ended up signing to a different label and didn't get much push. It has a beautiful female vocal and a guy singing, and they talk about getting high and sipping flower juice, and other kind of very typical psychedelic things. It's a very visual song and it does evoke that whole montage of hippies dropping acid, you know. It's a great song and I love it so much, when I produced Martina Topley-Bird we covered it [on 2008's *The Blue God*], and we kept it pretty close."

Danger Mouse's 30th Century label launches early next year with an album by Autolux.

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Still flying high: Don Henley, "You know there's this other band I play in sometimes?"

ROCK'N'ROLL CONFIDENTIAL

DON HENLEY

The Eagle talks nerves, Jagger and Broadway.

"This is an historic place, so many hit records have been recorded here: Frank Sinatra, Beach Boys, Nat King Cole. You can feel the vibes." We're in Studio A, on the ground floor of Capitol Tower, the giant record stack on Hollywood and Vine. Don Henley, who's been a Dallas resident for decades, is in Los Angeles, the city where he co-founded the Eagles 45 years ago, to promote his new solo album and first in 15 years, *Cass County*. Capitol Records revived their old magenta-coloured label for the double vinyl edition; Henley's clearly thrilled.

Cass County is a country album and a fine one it is too, recorded in Nashville and Texas and featuring guest appearances by Dolly Parton, Trisha Yearwood, Dixie Chicks, Miranda Lambert and Martina McBride – "There's this dude thing going on in country now, this 'Bro Country' thing; there really ought to be more women" – as well as Merle Haggard, Vince Gill and, erm, Mick Jagger. "Listen to everything the Stones recorded between 1968 and 1972," Henley tells MOJO. "A lot of country."

Cass County is where you grew up. What's it like?

Very rural, a one traffic-light town, one post office, one sheriff, one Dairy Queen, one doctor, one of everything. A beautiful place – rolling hills, forests, rivers and lakes.

Were you known to the one sheriff?

I was known to the sheriff (*laughs*). I was never arrested, but back in those days they were a little more easy-going. They knew everyone and knew who your parents were, so if they caught you with alcohol, instead of throwing you in jail they would simply take the alcohol from you, send you home and probably drink it themselves.

What did you take with you from your childhood?

A great sense of freedom and security. You could walk to school, roam around fields and swim in the river. Football was the most important thing in Texas – still is – but we also had a good marching band and I played the drums. From my parents I took a really good work ethic. They also encouraged my interest in music.

You duet with Dolly Parton on a Louvin Brothers song. A longtime Dolly fan?

Absolutely; one of the greatest artists

DON'S BOMBS

Henley's hot five

1. **The Beatles** *Rubber Soul* (PARLOPHONE, 1965)
2. **Ray Charles** *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* (ABC-PARAMOUNT, 1962)
3. **Randy Newman** *Trouble In Paradise* (WARNER BROS, 1983)
4. **Merle Haggard** *The Way I Am* (MCA, 1980)
5. **Led Zeppelin** *IV* (ATLANTIC, 1971) and *II* (ATLANTIC, 1969)

Danny Clinch, Karen Keats

to have ever come down the pike. I was working in Nashville and she came down to the studio, dressed to the nines, with two ladies – one was her hairdresser – who sat quietly in the back. We played the track and she said, "Me and Porter [Wagoner] used to do this song!" Then, after singing it a couple of times, she said, "The key is a little bit high for me." I said, "Sorry, but this is the key we've recorded it in," and she said, "Well OK, I guess I'll just have to rare back and get it then" – that's what we say in the South; I suppose the correct phrase is 'rear', like a horse. So she rared back and got it and then she left.

You also sing with Mick Jagger.

I wanted someone unexpected. I don't really know Mick Jagger that well, but one of the earliest times we crossed paths was back in the early '70s at a charity concert in NYC. The Stones were headlining and we were opening and I was very nervous. But we were called back for an encore and Mick Jagger was standing in the wings. He'd been listening to our set. He leaned over to me and said, "They like you." That meant a lot to me; I never forgot that. To be honest, I wasn't in the room with Mick when he did his part but it came back with an added bonus, a great harmonica part. People forget what a great harp player he is – and a great songwriter.

Your first solo album in 15 years – slacker or what?

(*Laughs*) No. You know there's this other band I play in sometimes?

Joe Walsh said a while back that there might be one more album from the Eagles before the band "wraps it up".

I would say at this point in time that another album is rather unlikely but I have learned to never say never. We do have plans however to develop a Broadway musical based on our catalogue – primarily around the song Hotel California, but it would employ a great many of the songs going back to the beginning.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

When we were in England, recording *Desperado*, I was a nervous wreck. I was standing in this huge room, Island Studios, with a big orchestra right behind me, and they were bored to tears. Some older gentlemen had brought chessboards and they would play between takes. I would hear all these remarks like, "Well, you know, I don't feel much like a desperado." I was so intimidated that I didn't sing my best. Our producer Glyn Johns, who is still a friend of mine I think, wanted to get the album done quickly and economically and he didn't let me do many takes. I wish I could have done that song again.

Sylvie Simmons

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

WRECKLESS ERIC

Wreckless Eric salutes The Pretty Things' 1969 masterpiece *S.F. Sorrow.*

1969 was an exciting time to be a 15-year-old. I was listening to Hendrix, *Disraeli Gears*, Eire Apparent's album, and John Peel's Top Gear and Mike Raven's soul show. The Pretty Things were the first real professional band I'd ever seen, at the Brighton Dome in 1968. They were fantastic: they had a strobe light and Twink threw up, Jon Povey had to play drums. They were a magical group.

I bought *S.F. Sorrow*, an original mono copy on the Columbia label, in Hanningtons department store. At home we had a blue and grey Bush record player with a white grill, and if you turned it up all the way it sounded great. The Pretty Things had already had a profound effect, I had all their singles, but *S.F. Sorrow* was sensational. It was completely other. There was the backwards stuff, distortion, Dick Taylor's fuzz guitar, and I loved the story – the family from up north, arriving with a cardboard suitcase in a pram; S.F. as a kid, grown up meeting the girl at the bus stop, and going off to war. Then the second side is a complete psychotic breakdown on record. And a great sleeve to pore over when listening to it, trying to get the clues, thinking, That could be me.

From despair to here: "That record has never stopped ringing in my head," says Wreckless Eric; (bottom) The Pretty Things' *S.F. Sorrow*.

"YOU HAVE TO TELL THE TRUTH OR YOU'RE JUST A CABARET ACT."

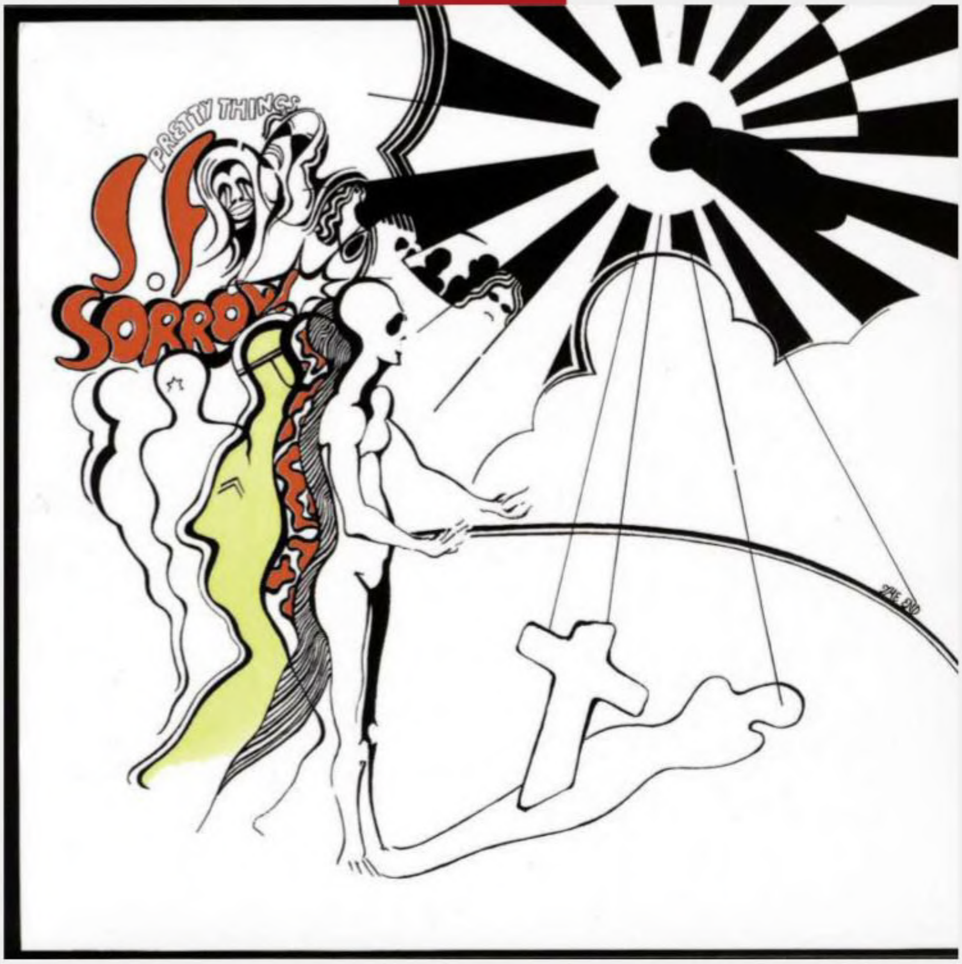
It changed me because they'd showed it was possible to move from garage R&B to psychedelia, and it had an Englishness about it. That had always been my problem. I love American music, R&B, blues, rock'n'roll, trash, but you have to tell the truth or you're just a cabaret act. Straight away it was so odd and so English, it didn't go to that American default, and it wasn't twee. It had the fog you had in those days. That was something I was looking for.

In 1991 I played with The Pretty Things, with Bruce Brand. They looked disappointed at first, but when we started playing they turned round and said, "You *know* the songs?" God it was fantastic, a dream come true. They were still gods to me.

I play bass quite a lot, and I have a cream Fender Musicmaster, exactly the same as Wally Waller when I saw The Pretty Things. The bass lines on that album have stuck with me, I can't help but quote them. Lots of stuff off that record has never stopped ringing in my head.

Ian Harrison

Wreckless Eric's AmERICa is out now on Fire. Catch his UK tour this month!



Tennessee for miles: NOTS (from left) Alexandra Eastburn, Charlotte Watson, Natalie Hoffman and Meredith Lones (bass).

MOJORISING

NOTS

Psychick garage scuzz from Memphis, chasing "general weirdness".

Regional Tennessee TV show Local Memphis Live usually covers such local interest stories as the US's National Deviled Eggs Day, the Fred Astaire Dance Studio's thoughts on Dancing With Stars or maybe an underwater pumpkin carving competition. But last September, the daytime 'Mic Check' slot was disrupted by NOTS, who contaminated the morning calm with Reactor, their high tensile, stark howl into the void, and then the accusatory Decadence, played hard and mean and wearing matching sunglasses.

"It was very early in the morning and we only wore the shades because we were tired, it's not a general aesthetic," says voice and guitarist Natalie Hoffman, speaking in Cincinnati en route to Pittsburgh. "That was hilarious, though, it's what our song Talk Show is about…"

That track – repeated refrain, "Psychic talk show!" – appears on *We Are NOTS*, their album getting its UK release this month through Heavenly Recordings. Recorded with local production veteran Doug Easley, it's a 26-minute blast of jagged post-punk modern, glorifying in repetitive vocals and riffs which recall Lie Dream Of A Casino Soul-era Fall or a danker, brutalist version of early B-52's. The gnomic fracture of such songs as Static, Black Mold and White Noise are enhanced by synth player Alexandra Eastburn, who twists and scopes psychotropic keyboard noise in thrillingly untutored style.

Hoffman admits that leaving Nixa, Missouri to study photography in Memphis was a formative move.

"I played the saxophone in a marching band when I was younger and got into jazz," she remembers. "But when I came to Memphis it introduced me to a much wider variety of music… in the city there was just so much more potential to go and see things, and musicians have such high energy levels there."

Hoffman played bass with Ty Segall's hard-touring Memphis punk pals Ex-Cult for three years, but made good on a plan, formulated in 2010, to collaborate with philosophy student and Manatees drummer Charlotte Watson. With members coming and going a not irregular theme in the band's history, NOTS recorded their debut in summer 2014.

"It definitely has a feeling of everyone getting to know each other," says Hoffman. "Alexandra had never really played before, but I just knew she listened to good music, so it turned out good."

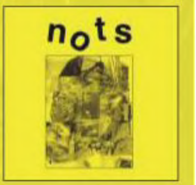
Regarding influences, she continues, "The Fall's *Hex Enduction Hour* is incredibly influential… that first song The Classical is one of my favourite basslines ever I think. Can as well, just because they're so surprising, constantly. We also listened to Phil Manzanera and Brian Eno and [mid-'70s French psych oddity] Acid Revolution by the Rob Jo Star Band for their general weirdness – such insane textures. But we kind of did our own thing from there."

She admits the album is a year old now and that new creation is essential.

"They're really good songs to play live," she says, "but yeah, I think we want to really try and go further." Expect a new album early in the new year.

Ian Harrison

"WE WANT TO REALLY TRY AND GO FURTHER."



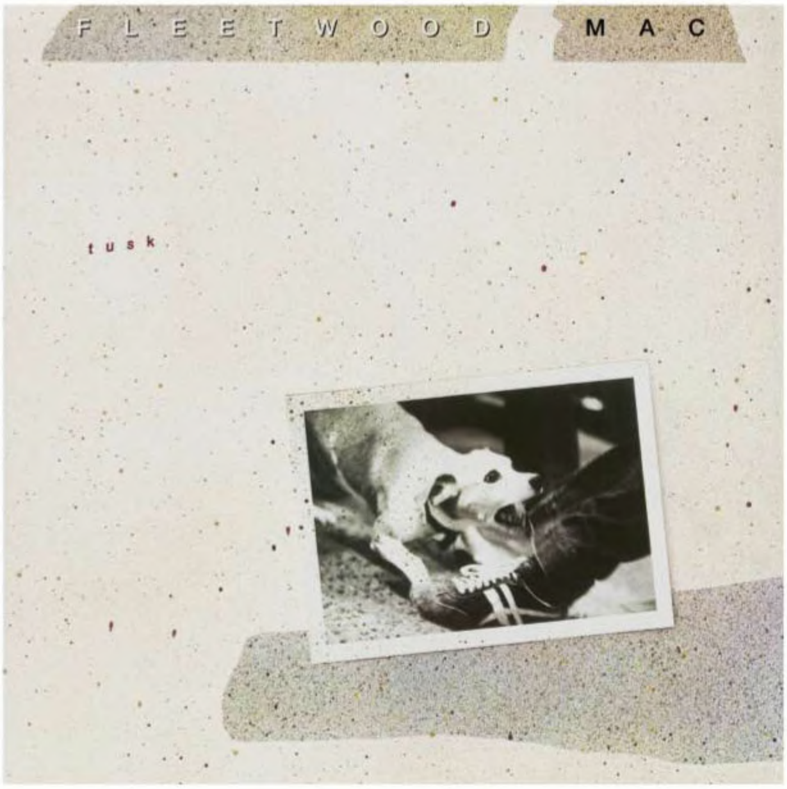
FACT SHEET

- For fans of: The Fall, Viet Cong, Mars.
- An online T-shirt model for NOTS merch is the grandmother of synth player Alexandra. "She's beautiful," says Natalie. "I think she hasn't heard the music, but she loves that Ali is in the band, so I think that she'll love it no matter what."
- NOTS turnover of members begs the question: is Hoffman basing the band's hiring/firing policy on Mark E. Smith's? "Oh my God, I've never thought of that before," says Hoffman. "Maybe I am."

KEY TRACKS

- Reactor
- Televangelist
- Insect Eyes

FLEETWOOD MAC TUSK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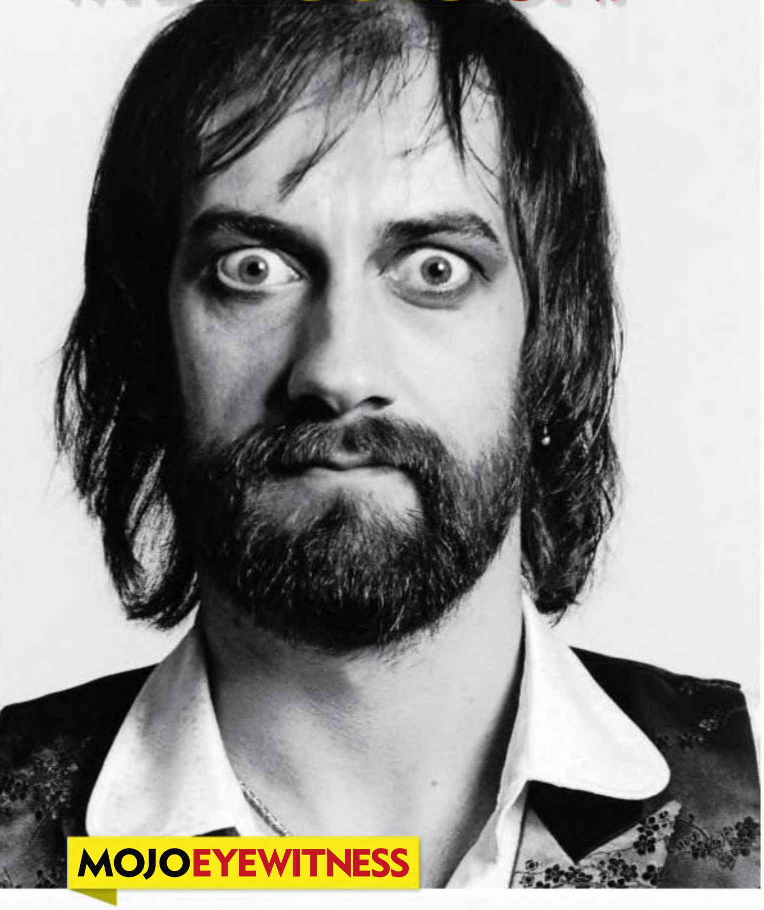
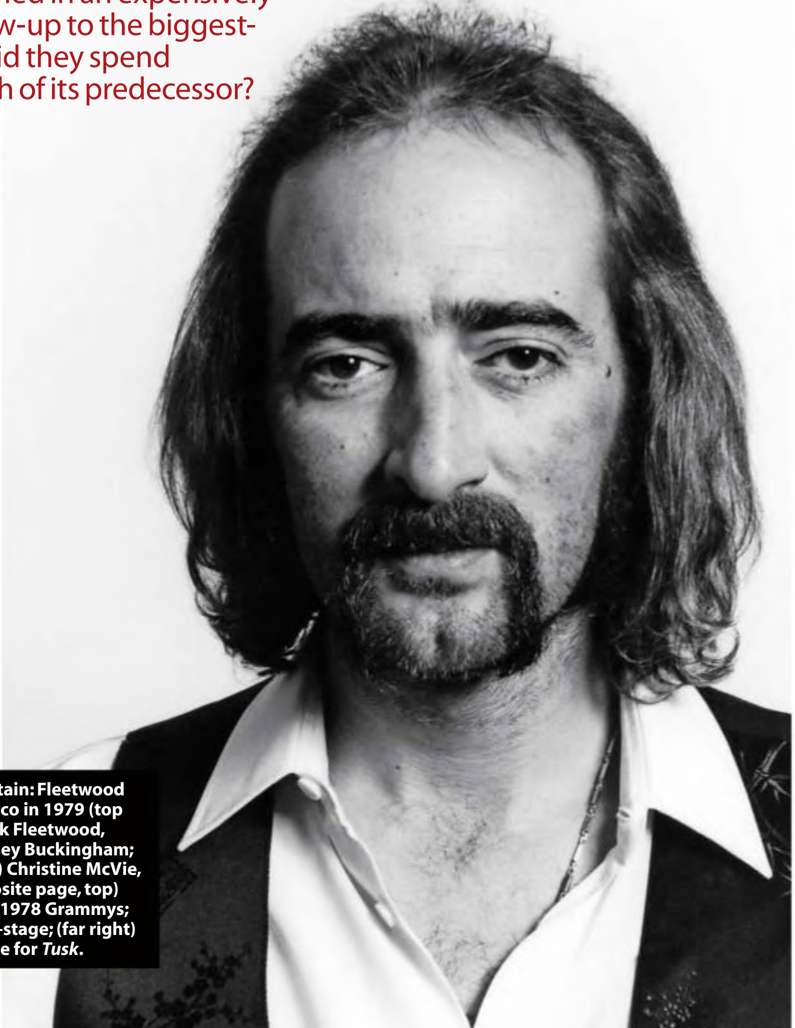


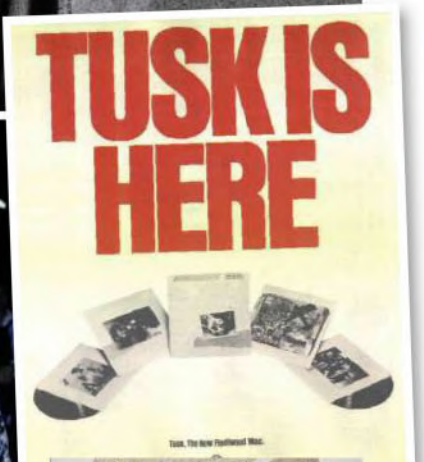
MOJO EYEWITNESS

FLEETWOOD MAC CREATE TUSK, 1979

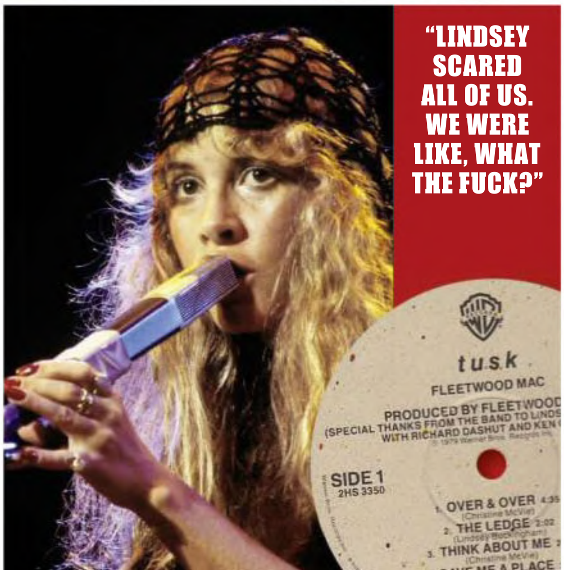
After a huge world tour, Fleetwood Mac reconvened in an expensively customised Los Angeles studio to make the follow-up to the biggest-selling rock record of its time, *Rumours*. So how did they spend $1million in the process? And why did it sell a tenth of its predecessor?



Climb ivory mountain: Fleetwood Mac in San Francisco in 1979 (top row, from left) Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham; (bottom, from left) Christine McVie, John McVie; (opposite page, top) celebrating at the 1978 Grammys; (bottom) Nicks on-stage; (far right) press ad and sleeve for *Tusk*.


TUSK IS HERE
Tusk. The new Fleetwood Mac.

FLEETWOOD MAC



"LINDSEY SCARED ALL OF US. WE WERE LIKE, WHAT THE FUCK?"

PART 1 "COMPLETE CRAZY LAND"

Stevie Nicks on fractured lovelives, crocheting scarves and the record they *thought* they were going to make.

Stevie Nicks: "*Rumours* was a perfect, off-the-top-of-our-head thing that turned into a huge-selling, amazing record. It wasn't planned, but we were not going to make that same record. Nobody wanted to do exactly the same thing each time, that's just five people being creative. This was different though, this was Lindsey [Buckingham] really making a stand. 'I'm not going to do a remake of *Rumours*. I don't care what anyone says.' And the rest of us were like, 'What do you mean? Why would any of us want to do *Rumours* over, we just want to make a great new record.' If you want to go down some different pathways, study and research some different genres of music and change it up, everybody was fine with that, but Lindsey was just so adamant about doing something that was the total opposite of the previous records. He announced it so viscerally, so demandingly that I think he scared all of us. We were like, What the fuck?

Mick [Fleetwood] wanted to make an African record, He was saying, 'Let's do chants and amazing percussion.' I love all that too, so great, and Christine [McVie] too, and John [McVie] would have liked to have been in an all-black blues band, so he was all for that. We were definitely all on the rhythm train. So we set off on this journey, and this record started to unravel itself in the Village and become something extremely different.

I think *Tusk* is a spectacular record. But when we were making it for that 13 months we were locked up in the Village – we'd completely redecorated this Studio D, we had shrunken heads and leis and Polaroids and velvet pillows and saris and sitars and all kinds of wild and crazy instruments, and these tusks on the console, it was kind of like living on an African burial ground – it was heavy, intense heavy. Sometimes it wasn't very happily heavy either. We were all down with getting heavy, but Lindsey was really trying to make it weirder and heavier than any of us were able to quite comprehend. But we went along, we followed him up the mountain.

My affair with Mick went on for the first three months of *Tusk*. We broke up, my best friend Sara fell in love with him and that just turned into a nightmare. She moved in with Mick overnight and I got a call from Sara's husband telling me the news. Neither of them bothered to tell me. I went and sat up on the mountain for three hours and watched my life pass before me, then I had to get up the next day, get dressed and go into work, and not ever look at Mick for months. It was horrible, horrible, months of sitting in that room, five days a week, all day long, and all night sometimes, sitting on the couch just watching, writing in my journal and watching some more, and crocheting scarves by the dozen, it was a very strange atmosphere. I'd have been happy to sit it out in the lounge, but I wasn't gonna not know what was going on, not be a part of the music that was being made in my name. So I was gonna sit there and watch everybody, even though I would have liked to have been anywhere else. I was like, 'Lindsey with your new ideas be damned. Mick, you be damned also – Christine, John and I will watch and make sure that you guys don't go completely round the twist and mess up everything for us. We'll be the keepers of the gate while you guys go to complete and utter crazy land.'

I didn't understand the title, there was nothing beautiful or elegant about the word 'tusk'. All it really bought to mind was people stealing ivory. Even then in 1979 you just thought, the rhinos are being poached and the tusks are being stolen and the elephants are being slaughtered and ivory's being sold on the black market. I don't recall it being [Mick's slang term for the male member], that went right over my prudish little head, I wasn't told that until quite a while after the record was done, and when I did find out I liked the title even less!"

TURN OVER! MAC DADDY MICK FLEETWOOD ON KEEPING YOUR EDGE AND LIFE AS A FELLINI FLICK…

Pat Johnson (5) www.patjohnson.com, Getty Images (2)

PART 2 "OUR PLACE OF WORSHIP"

FLEETWOOD MAC CREATE TUSK, 1979

Mick Fleetwood on replica bathrooms, par-taying and working ones' balls off.

"Our lifestyle was well and truly changed by *Rumours*, riding a wave of personal and musical success beyond any measure. The whole thing was like a Fellini flick. There we all were, busted up as usual, at the height of our success. Stevie and I were very prone to living the rock'n'roll lifestyle, more than anyone else in the band, we were the par-taying group leaders. That was alive and well. But it didn't detract from what we were doing. Studio D at the Village was our place of worship. It was really a trip.

That studio was everything we'd ever dreamt of, including replicas of bathrooms that Lindsey Buckingham liked at home. It sounds like an indulgence, but in truth it's very much not. I think it's a really cool thing that a bunch of people don't go in and say, 'Hey let's just feed them fish, make an album in three months and get the fuck out of here.' We worked our balls off, willingly and lovingly, and we always do. And, by the way, that's our money. We were funnelling our resources back into our art. We learnt not to go for the cheap one, I'm glad that didn't happen.

I remember Lindsey sitting on his lawn with me saying, 'Can I do this, bring stuff in from home?' And I said that it was not going to be a problem. However, this is a band, at some point it has to be integrated. [He was doing] a lot of experimental stuff excluding our direct input, but I had muscle memory of Peter Green doing that, so it wasn't that shocking. Like Lindsey playing a Kleenex box as a snare drum and getting me to overdub. That didn't freak me out because John and I remembered that happening on *Then Play On*, Peter playing the timpani part or something. It's fair to say Lindsey felt he had to fight to get this to happen. I think that all went away. When we went into making this album there was no trepidation at all.

We referred to Fleetwood Mac as The Bubble. We lived and coexisted in that for many years, the touring and the studio was one big journey, one commitment. We were very focused. Because we managed ourselves we didn't have a paranoid Svengali going, 'It's gonna be the kiss of death if you do this.' So we did it.

Tusk stands as a testament to Lindsey, who really foresaw that pitfall that happens to some artists who can end up with a form of complacency, which leads to, 'Oh, we're sort of done.' *Tusk* stands as great body of work, a creative milestone and a lesson learned, that if you want to keep creatively stimulated you have to take risks. Fellow musicians and young bands are discovering it all the time, which is very gratifying. It truly is my favourite album."

Jim Irvin

Tusk is reissued in box set form on December 4.

"LINDSEY PLAYING A KLEENEX BOX... THAT DIDN'T FREAK ME OUT."

Dentine-age kicks: getting their star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, October 10, 1979: (from left) Christine, John, Mick, Stevie and Lindsey; (below) the band from Norman Seeff's shoot for the LP sleeve.

Photoshot, Norman Seeff courtesy Waner Bros

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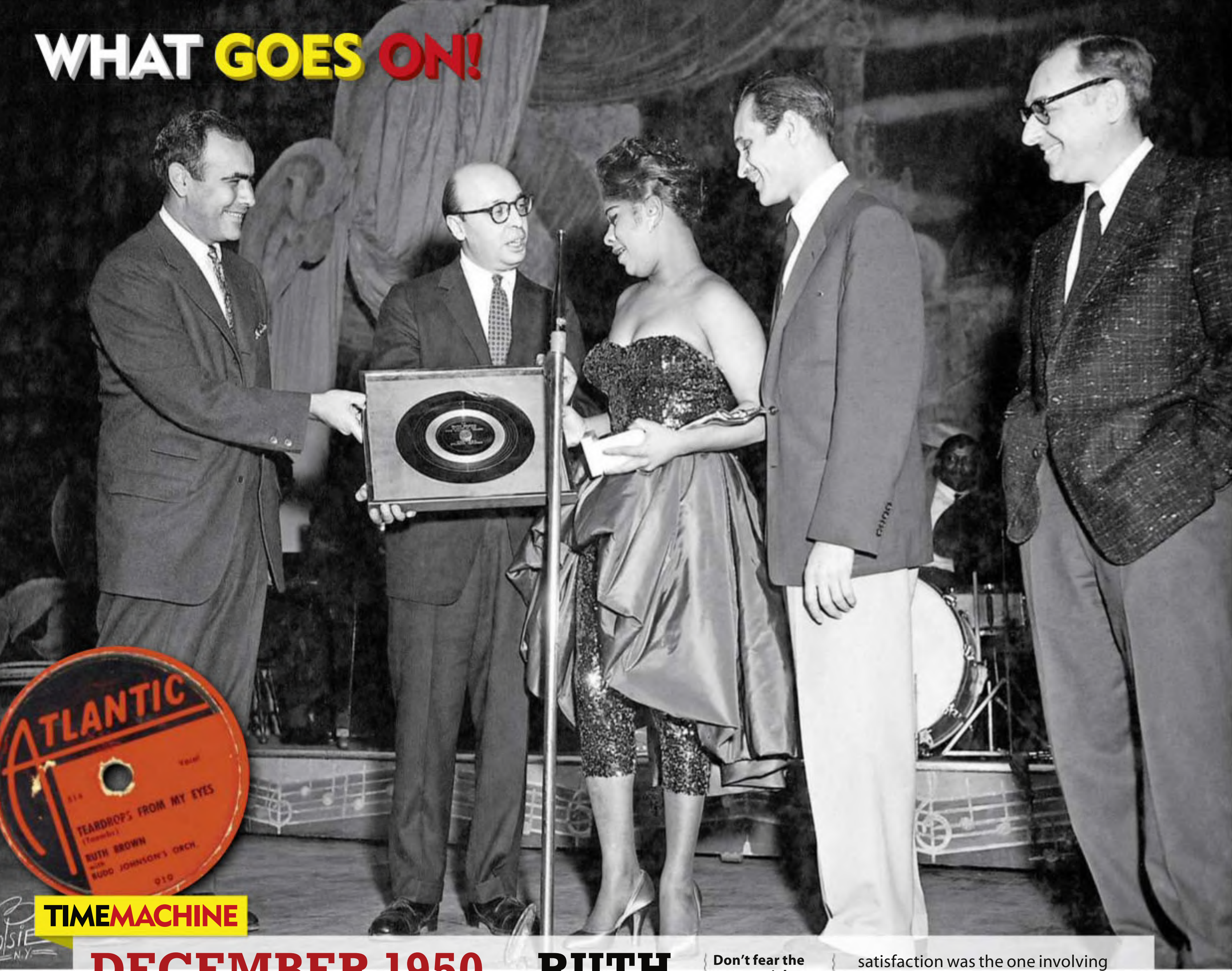


TIMEMACHINE

DECEMBER 1950 ...RUTH BROWN INAUGURATES THE 45 ERA!

DECEMBER 9 The switch to microgroove was well under way. Atlantic Records had released their first 7-inch 45 single, Teardrops From My Eyes, in October 1950. Featuring the voice of Ruth Brown, the record had hit Number 1 in the R&B charts by December. "A piece of history," Brown hailed it.

Ruth Brown had previously charted with So Long, her first-ever record, in September 1949. Atlantic's Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson were ecstatic: it was the label's second release to notch a place in the charts. Atlantic was not to be a one hit wonder but a real record company.

Teardrops From My Eyes was the icing on the cake. The single was not only a hit but, in terms of black music, a super-hit as it topped the R&B charts for 11 weeks in a row. Not bad for a girl who had signed her Atlantic contract in a Pennsylvania hospital bed after a car accident in January 1949.

Penned by Rudy Toombs, Teardrops From My Eyes attracted cover versions by the sackload. Even in the brief time it took Brown's rendition to clamber to the top, rival versions by Louis Prima, Frank Warren, June Hutton, Red Kirk, Benny Goodman, Jo Stafford with Gene Autry and Wynonie Harris with Lucky Millinder's band were available, thanks to industrious promotion by George Simon's Simon House company. Atlantic Records even covered their own release, recording a version by one Bill Haley, leader of The Saddlemen, a musician whose time was yet to come.

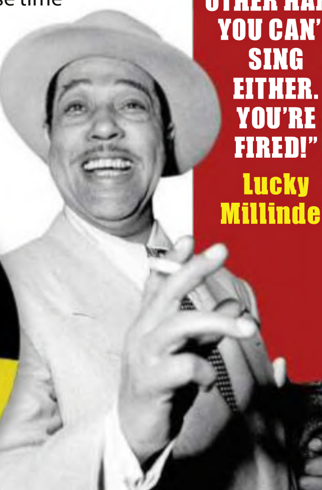
But perhaps the cover that might have brought Ruth Brown most satisfaction was the one involving Harris and Millinder. She'd previously been a band singer with Millinder, and in her 1996 autobiography Miss Rhythm she revealed: "For over a month I rode the bus with the Millinder band without getting to sing one note. Lucky chose to stick with his two regular singers, Bull Moose Jackson and Annisteen Allen." One night, Millinder lined up a gig in Washington DC and allowed Brown to perform two songs. They went down well with the audience, after which Ruth took the opportunity to grab half-a-dozen Cokes for her fellow band members. According to Brown, Millinder confronted her and snapped: "I hired you to sing, not be a waitress. On the other hand you can't sing either. You're fired!"

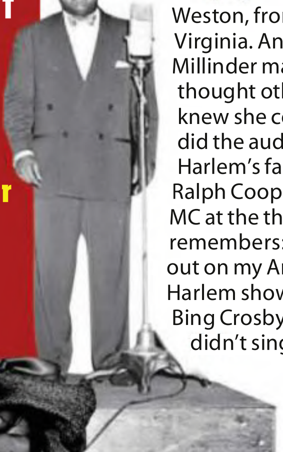
Don't fear the weeper: (above, from left) Atlantic's Jerry Wexler and Ahmet Ertegun present Ruth Brown with a gold disc at the Harlem Apollo, with friends; (far left) Teardrops From My Eyes on 78rpm.

> **"I HIRED YOU TO SING, NOT BE A WAITRESS. ON THE OTHER HAND YOU CAN'T SING EITHER. YOU'RE FIRED!"**
> **Lucky Millinder**

She'd started out as Ruth Weston, from Portsmouth, Virginia. And though Lucky Millinder may have thought otherwise, she knew she could sing. So did the audience at Harlem's famed Apollo. Ralph Cooper, long-term MC at the theatre, remembers: "Ruth started out on my Amateur Night In Harlem show. She sang a Bing Crosby song but she didn't sing it like Der

ATLANTIC
514
45 R.P.M.
45-919
Vocal
TEARDROPS FROM MY EYES
(Toombs)
RUTH BROWN
with
BUDD JOHNSON'S ORCH.





All cried out (right, from left) the hit 45; Ruth Brown supporter Duke Ellington, and doubter Lucky Millinder.

Bingle. The audience was so blown away they called here back to repeat the chorus."

Someone else who liked the way Ruth Brown phrased a song was Duke Ellington. It was he who mentioned his admiration to Herb Abramson and sparked Brown's career on Atlantic. In the wake of Teardrops From My Eyes, she'd notch a succession of major hits for Atlantic throughout the '50s.

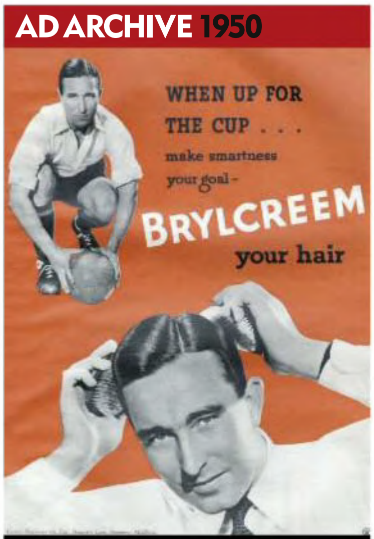
Around this time African-American news weekly Jet reported: "Her fee for a one-nighter is $1,000 for Theatre Engagements, $2,500 weekly. Ruth says her voice is largely responsible for her success but thinks she got a little help from Heaven. She always says a little prayer before entering any theatre to entertain. A buxom brown girl with a sparkling personality, Ruth is a visual as well as a vocal delight. She seems to put all the oomph of her size 16 figure into the mournful ballads which she sings in a lazy half-sobbing manner and into the vigorous blues which she delivers in a brash, naughty style."

Eventually her luck ran out and by the '60s she was a Long Island maid, cleaning floors and scrubbing toilets to put her children through school. Though Atlantic had become known as The House That Ruth Built, the headlines now read: "The Houses That Ruth Cleans". Thankfully, before her death in 2006, she'd pulled everything back. In 1989 she won a Grammy for her LP *Blues On Broadway* and a Tony Award for her role in the musical Black And Blue (she'd also memorably played Motormouth Maybelle Stubbs in John Waters' 1988 movie Hairspray). In 1993 she was inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame, when she emotionally thanked Ahmet Ertegun.

But Teardrops From My Eyes writer Rudy Toombs was not so fortunate. A joyful, exuberant man whom Ruth Brown credited as the reason for her success, he died in 1963, robbed and murdered in his Harlem apartment.

Fred Dellar

AD ARCHIVE 1950



Arsenal defender and England cricket ace Denis Compton plugs hair pomade. For grooming without gumming, guys!

PoPsiePhotos.com (2), Getty Images (3), Library Of Congress, Allstar, Alamy

ALSO THIS MONTH

ESY GOING

2 Latin-American bandleader **Esy Morales** dies from a heart attack at the age of 33. He recorded the hit Jungle Fantasy, which he performed in Criss Cross, a film noir starring Burt Lancaster and Yvonne De Carlo (pictured).

45 CRASH?

2 US record companies say production of 45rpm discs will continue despite a shortage of vinyl and other materials due to the Korean War.

THE THING IS

2 **Phil Harris** tops the US pop charts with oddball novelty record The Thing. Concerning the unspecified contents of a crate, the melody is that of the old English folk song The Lincolnshire Poacher. **John Peel** is a fan.

BIRD ON A GURNEY

6 Jazz saxman **Charlie Parker** enters New York's Medical Arts Hospital for an operation on his ulcers.

SHOT OF JAZZ

8 A coach containing members of the **Johnny Dankworth Seven** and **Kenny Graham's Afro-Cubists** has a lucky escape when a bullet shatters a window just above tenor saxman **Don Rendell**. The incident happened near Dunstable as the party drove to Birmingham.

TUBB'S ROOTS

9 Country music star **Ernest Tubb** says he's fulfilling a lifetime wish with his Decca LP of the late **Jimmie Rodgers**' songs. The LP's note is to be written by Rodgers' widow **Carrie**.

ROGER, BILKO

16 Comedians **Phil Silvers** and **Sid Field** appear on The **Frank Sinatra** Show. Variety says the show is the best in the series.

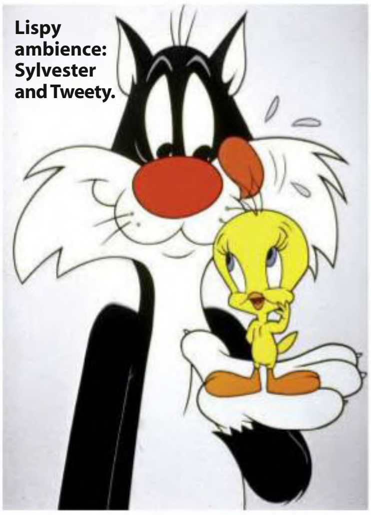
BILLIE WIZZ

22 **Billie Holiday**, with pianist **Jack Russin**, opens at Chicago's Hi Note club for a two-week stay. **Miles Davis** is also on the bill.

Musik von Caldonia: Louis Jordan, King Of The Jukebox, makes his point.

JORDAN BOOGIES ON

DECEMBER 9 Louis Jordan, who's just hit big with the riotous Saturday Night Fish Fry, renews his waxing deal with Decca Records for another three years. Jordan, who's enjoying an extended vacation, flies to New York from his Tucson, Arizona, home to sign the contract with Decca A&R boss Dave Kapp, who also returned to the city from a lengthy Hollywood sojourn. Jordan will begin his thirteenth year with Decca on December 20, though this rock'n'roll pioneer's last major hit will be Weak Minded Blues in 1951.



Lispy ambience: Sylvester and Tweety.

PUDDY TAT REIGNS SUPREME

DECEMBER 11 I Tawt I Taw A Puddy Tat – where voice artist great Mel Blanc provides the voices of Looney Tunes' cartoon canary Tweety Pie and his lisping nemesis Sylvester The Cat, backed by the Billy May Orchestra – completes a four-week run as Britain's Number 1 single, holding off Nat King Cole's Orange Coloured Sky. Both records are on the Capitol label.

TOP TEN

US R&B SINGLES DECEMBER

1 **TEARDROPS FROM MY EYES** RUTH BROWN ATLANTIC

2 **ANYTIME, ANYPLACE, ANYWHERE** JOE MORRIS ATLANTIC

3 **BAD BAD WHISKEY** AMOS MILBURN ALADDIN

4 **PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE** PERCY MAYFIELD SPECIALTY

5 **OH BABE** LARRY DARNELL REGAL

6 **OH BABE** JIMMY PRESTON AND BURNETTA EVANS DERBY

7 **FAR AWAY BLUES** LITTLE ESTHER SAVOY

8 **EVERY NIGHT ABOUT THIS TIME** FATS DOMINO IMPERIAL

9 **MILLION DOLLAR SECRET** HELEN HUMES MODERN

10 **OH BABE** ROY MILTON SPECIALTY

Loot suite: Helen Humes coins it in.

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1932-2015

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Mark Murphy, the jazz singers' singer, left us on October 22.

In 1956, an album titled *Meet Mark Murphy* tumbled into my life. Completely different to anything else around, it was filled with songs delivered with unique phrasing and an amazing sense of rhythm. I thought he was the greatest male singer I'd ever encountered. The years that followed did little to change my opinion.

Capitol Records heard him, tried to turn him into a commercial proposition. But the ploy never worked. Mark Murphy could only walk his own path, one that was totally uncommercial. "Jazz is an elitist music," he once informed me.

In 1961, the man from Syracuse, New York, signed for Riverside and cut *Rah!* plus *That's How I Love The Blues!*, two of the finest vocal jazz albums ever recorded. But the label crashed in 1964, and though his single of Fly Me To The Moon became a minor hit and he was voted New Star Of The Year in Downbeat magazine, Murphy moved to Britain, recording several albums here and becoming a regular on late-night radio shows.

Scott Walker loved Murphy's individual style, the way in which he could deviate from delivering a high-energy, scat-filled crowd-pleaser to a tender, totally romantic ballad. Dusty Springfield adored his way with a song too, while in the Melody Maker's annual poll, Murphy was voted runner-up to Sinatra in 1965 and 1966.

"Living In London at that time was lovely and you could live like a king," he claimed. But he tired of what he termed his "gypsy life" and returned to the States in 1972 and began recording a much-hailed series of albums for Muse. However, he remained a cult figure in Britain and drew 700 young admirers to the Wag club when he played in London in '87. Now, over 40 albums and six Grammy nominations since he first made our acquaintance, Mark Murphy has finally quit the scene. We'll never know about that party Liza Minnelli alleged was forever going on in his head.

Fred Dellar

Mark Murphy, listening to the party forever going on in his head.

> "JAZZ IS AN ELITIST MUSIC'," HE ONCE INFORMED ME."

THE LEGACY

Album: *Rah!* (Riverside, 1961)

The Sound: Roaring big band fashioned by arranger Ernie Wilkins with Mark Murphy, cast almost like the lead horn at times, interpreting material by Miles Davis and Horace Silver and caressing such classy ballads as Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most. Bill Evans, Clark Terry and Blue Mitchell figure among the stellar line-up.

THEY ALSO SERVED

HOUSTON-BORN tenor saxophonist **WILTON FELDER** (b.1940) rose to prominence in the '60s with **The Jazz Crusaders**, whose blues, bop and funk grooves enjoyed acclaim with catchy classics like 1971's Put It Where You Want It, penned by pianist **Joe Sample**. They later dropped the 'Jazz' and reached wider success when **Randy Crawford**'s vivacious vocals breathed even greater life into 1979's Street Life. Felder, who also played bass, recorded solo albums including *Inherit The Wind*, **Bobby Womack** singing the title track. Felder died on September 27.

MANAGER and beatnik **JOE MOSS** (b.1943) was running influential Manchester fashion line Crazy Face when he met the 17-year-old **Johnny Marr**. Later he would become **The Smiths**' first manager, guiding them through their crucial early phase then leaving in late 1983 before the group's first trip to America. Said Marr, "It was Joe who put the idea in my head to go and knock on Morrissey's door… without him there wouldn't have been any Smiths." Thereafter Moss promoted shows in Manchester and returned to managing with Marion, Haven and, from 1999, Marr.

SOULFUL voice **DIANE CHARLEMAGNE** (b.1964) first came to notice with Manchester funk act **52nd Street** in the mid '80s. In 1993 she enjoyed Top 10 hits with **Urban Cookie Collective**. She also sang with **Cool Down Zone**, **Moby**, **D:Ream**, **High Contrast**, and, on his 1994 track Inner City Life, **Goldie**.

Inner city star: Diane Charlemagne.

CAMERA OBSCURA keyboardist **CAREY LANDER** (b.1982) joined the Glasgow indie band in 2002, and played on albums including *Let's Get Out Of This Country* and *My Maudlin Career*. First diagnosed with osteosarcoma in 2011, in 2015 she launched a fundraising campaign for the Sarcoma UK charity, which has so far raised more than £73,000.

R&B voice **HERBIE GOINS** (b.1939) was stationed in Britain with the US army before joining **Chris Barber**'s band and later **Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated**. In 1965 he left to front R&B group **The Night-Timers**, and played Mod hangouts including the Marquee and the Flamingo. From the early '70s he worked as a producer in Italy.

DRUMMER **TOM HEAD** (b.unknown) played with **The Fall** from 1998 to 2000. As Thomas Patrick Murphy he also appeared onscreen on Coronation Street, Crimewatch, Brookside, Emmerdale and The League Of Gentlemen. He later played with the Bolton/Wigan classic punk tribute band **Strangeways**.

BUSINESSWOMAN and matriarch **GAIL ZAPPA** (b.1945) was a determined champion of the recorded work of her husband **Frank**. In guarding his legacy she took on major labels and, when iTunes was launched, Apple co-founder **Steve Jobs**. She also oversaw copious archival releases from the vault situated beneath the Zappas' Los Angeles home. Before her death, her son **Ahmet** had already taken over the running of the Zappa Family Trust, which was founded in 2002.

SINGER **CORY WELLS** (b.1941) co-founded **Three Dog Night** in 1968. He sang lead on the band's hit cover of Randy Newman's Mama Told Me (Not To Come) in 1970. He recorded the solo album *Touch Me* in 1978, and reformed Three Dog Night in the mid '80s.

Clive Prior

Getty Images (2)

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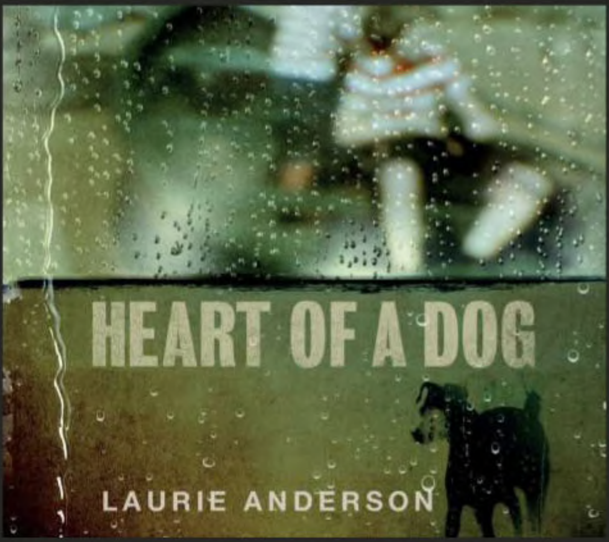

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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

A Midwest **violinist**-turned-New York **performance artist**, **O Superman** shot her to fame. Now, as Laurie Anderson puts her **philosophy of life** on film, and comes to terms with **husband Lou Reed**’s death, she says **“All we have is now.”**

Interview by **ANDREW MALE** • Portrait by **TOM OLDHAM**

“I’M SORRY,” SAYS LAURIE ANDERSON, “WHEN I’m away from my home I kind of take my office with me.” She is sitting in a high-backed designer leather chair in the corner of a cluttered Warner Records anteroom, scrolling through the e-mails on her phone. Tonight she has a few hours off and might take herself to Foyles bookstore, but for the rest of the time she’ll be stuck in what she calls “the film festival rut: screen your film, talk about your film…” as she promotes Heart Of A Dog, a funny, sad, lyrical cine-essay that moves from ruminations on the death of her much-loved rat-terrier Lolabelle to reflections on storytelling, language, identity, memory and loss.

Anderson’s tour-look is relaxed and Eastern, dark silk jacket, linen trousers and trainers, and her words are delivered with a melancholy lightness, her eyes wide and bright, her smile puckish, suggesting that it’s no biggie, this European festival rut, just something that goes with the job, after 30-plus years as a multimedia performance-art avatar, monologist and recording artist of rare and strange beauty.

It’s the same soothing yet questioning tone we first heard on Anderson’s dreamlike eight-minute 1981 single O Superman – debuted on John Peel’s late-night BBC Radio 1 show – that led to a signing with Warner Bros Records, briefly propelling the then 33-year-old New York-based performance artist into a heady world of pop stardom. The fame eventually settled down into something more convenient, but the song never really went away. It was under the surface of albums like 1994’s Brian Eno-produced *Bright Red*, in which Anderson attempted to comprehend America’s war in the Gulf, and reappeared in her live New York performance on September 19, 2001, where lines such as “Here come the planes/They’re American planes” hummed with their eerie prescient power, confirming what Anderson has always said, that “we’re all still stuck in the same war”. And it recurred in the short evening performances that followed her most recent art installation, Habeas Corpus, at the New York Armoury in October. Here, a live video image of Mohammed el Gharani, one of the youngest Guantánamo detainees, was projected onto a 16-foot-high sculpture of a seated human form the size of the Lincoln Memorial.

WE’RE NOT WORTHY

Jean Michel Jarre salutes **Laurie Anderson**’s artistry.

“For innovation in sound, Laurie has opened so many doors through the way she uses processed vocals and her different approaches. She’s a linguist, a writer, a poet, a painter too and totally underrated as a visual artist. She is intellectual and animalistic at the same time, always evolving into those extremes.”

Tom Sheehan

The drone score for Habeas Corpus was composed by Lou Reed, Anderson’s former husband and partner for over 20 years before his death in 2013, and it’s Lou and Habeas Corpus and the new film that our conversation keeps resetting to today, amid matters of the past and the future, bearing out the message that Heart Of A Dog plays out on, bound up in a Reed song from 2000, Turning Time Around. “He gets the last word,” says Anderson, “and it’s right to the point: don’t go looking to the past with your regrets, don’t go to the future and how much better it’s going to be. All we have is now.” ➢

How did Heart Of A Dog come about?

It was a commission from Arte, the French/German TV channel. They said, "Can you make a film about your philosophy of life?" I said, "I don't have one. And if I did I would not put it in the shape of a film and make you watch it." Well, the producer had come to [Anderson's 2012 performance piece] Dirtday! and he said, "You had those stories about your dog. Put those in," and I said, "OK." Then I added a few related stories, then asked a few questions about how you tell a story, and what happens when you repeat your story, or forget your story, and then, in the end, it's my philosophy of life. They've tricked me into it.

It references The Tibetan Book Of The Dead a lot…

I began to study The Tibetan Book Of The Dead after Lolabelle died. It became very personal because it's all about what I do as an artist anyway. How to be aware. That's it. You're not even asked to believe anything particular. That's an amazing approach to things. My family's religious background was one half Southern Baptist, the born again stuff, and the other side was Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant, which was just a be-nice-to-people religion. That's it, just be nice. So, I got a little smattering of different approaches.

The film is also a meditation on loss.

It's about death in general. I have only recently started to count the number of people who die in this film. But even though love and death are themes, the actual theme is story construction, like why do we tell stories and where is it that language becomes fallible and images have to take over. That's one of the reasons why the second story in the film is my mother's deathbed speech. She was a very proud person and very formal, so she waited on her death bed until all eight kids were there and she almost sort of stepped up to the microphone and said, "Thank you all for coming," and then she gets a little distracted and starts talking to the animals she sees on the ceiling, and in this way that you can watch the words just sort of ripping apart. It was one of the most moving things I've ever seen, because language is completely inadequate to the task of saying goodbye.

I don't want to make a trite leap, but this film ends with a Lou Reed song, the sound of Lou's voice…

That's not a trite leap. He didn't use any reverb on his voice in that song and it's very, very real. Very conversational. Very engaged. And I loved that he made that equation of love and time being the same thing.

How did growing up in the Midwest, in Illinois, shape the stories you told?

Well, Heart Of A Dog is also a film about the sky, as it represents freedom and fear. And in Habeas Corpus, the whole Armoury is turned into the night sky. It became a context for how we see our own freedom because it was for me as a child. A very, very flat place, with a dome of sky, that was the dominant thing where I grew up and even now I like really super-flat places like Holland. I see mountains and I feel hemmed in. Other people go, "That's nondescript." I say, "What do you mean? It's sky-rich."

You came from a big family, seven siblings including twin brothers. In Heart Of A Dog you tell a story about wanting to be noticed, of doing a back flip off the swimming pool high board and missing the pool. You broke your back, you were paralysed, doctors said you'd never walk again, and it took you two years to recover…

Yeah. I was the second oldest and so my job was to take care of a lot of them. It shaped my life, like anybody who has that. While I was in the middle of making Heart Of A Dog my older brother sent me these cartons of old 8mm film. Family films. I was really busy so I just reached in and transferred a couple and suddenly there's my little brothers in a stroller, there's me ice skating, there's the lake, the island, oh my God. I called my brothers and said, "Remember that time I almost drowned you, when the stroller went under the ice?" "Yes, we do!" They're twins so they have like an outboard brain and they were two and they remember that. And they said, "You're not going to put that in the film are you?" I said, "Do you mind?"

Ice skating is central to one of your earliest performance art pieces, Duets On Ice. You wore ice skates frozen in blocks of ice and played a duet with yourself on a violin where the bow hair was audiotape and the strings were a tape head. The piece ended when the ice melted…

Ice skating and frozen lakes was my life as a child. I came from a frozen world. Every winter there was snow up to the height of the ceiling, and so much of my life was being dazzled by the sparkle of winter. That and the sky are the things you carry with you.

You were studying classical violin from the age of five…

Yeah. My parents wanted a family orchestra.

The Midwest Von Trapps?

Hur. Not quite. Let's not go that far. We didn't… oh, we *did* wear matching outfits! What am I saying? Oh dear. We wore navy skirts and red sweaters. Nice.

You were an undergraduate at Mills College in California which housed The San Francisco Tape Music Center, home to Pauline Oliveros, Morton Subotnick, Terry Riley… Did your world cross over with theirs?

When I was there it was more Pablo Casals in residence. I was doing chemistry. I was pre-med. I had stopped violin. I realised I wasn't really good enough. I liked the idea of

A LIFE IN PICTURES

The look of Laurie: Anderson in the frame.

1 O Supergirl: Anderson in her senior year, 1965, at Glenbard West High School, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

2 Laurie gets cold feet: Anderson performs her 1974 piece Duets On Ice.

3 Velvet time: Anderson with late husband Lou Reed at the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame inductions, New York City, January 17, 1996.

4 Phone it in: Laurie prepares for United States Part II in her New York studio, 1980

5 Sent to detention: with Mohammed El Gharani in Anderson's recent "hybrid" work, Habeas Corpus.

6 Laurie and Lolabelle, the pooch that inspired her latest film, Heart Of A Dog, at a canine cocktail party to benefit Art For Animals, NYC, May 2003.

7 Performance art goes overground: Anderson in June 1982 after her commercial break-through with O Superman.

8 Scientific American: Laurie, in a robotic frame of mind, keeps up with current affairs on-stage circa 1984.

9 Laurie Anderson, artist, in 1982 when she signed for Warner Bros: "They spoke about 'the artists' with heavy quote marks… so cynical."

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Seth Poppel/Yearbook Library, Bob Bielecki, Photoshot (2), Image courtesy of the artist (picture 5), Corbis, Bob Gruen, Getty Images (2)

medical school a lot but I was only one semester at Mills. I hated it. I hated every minute of it because you had to wear a long skirt to dinner on Wednesday and that put me off the whole thing. I was just disgusted by that. I'd gone to California to be as far away from the Midwest as possible, so then I just decided to go to New York instead and in the middle of studying chemistry and botany, I realised I actually liked doing the drawings more than I liked getting the information right. So I thought maybe painting is more for me.

One of your earliest performance pieces, from 1972, was the Institutional Dream Series, where you slept in public places to see if specific sites influenced dreams. Heart Of A Dog begins with the recounting of a dream. Dreams seem integral to what you do…

I trust that world. A whole lot of things come from that world. One of my favourite stories Mohammed recounts in Habeas Corpus is about a detainee they were interrogating and he told them about a dream he'd had where a submarine came to Guantánamo to rescue everyone. Well, that night, Guantánamo Bay was filled with helicopters and ships, looking for the submarine that he had dreamed about.

That's so creepy. The CIA are looking for plots against them in our dreams.

We make plots in our dreams. It's an obvious thing to say, but many of our fears and hopes are expressed in our dreams. When you think of what you're actually talking about, it often has nothing to do with what's really going on. I put some really fast words up on the screen in Heart Of A Dog, [to represent] those words that go around in your head, that you never say. It's like talking to that person inside you, the silent witness, the person who's been there all the time, and to whom language sounds a little bit stupid. You're using them right now, as I am, as we're having this conversation, that silent witness is analysing it and thinking this, but not saying anything ever. That's why I wanted you to read this fast succession of unvoiced words. It's coming in a different way into your mind. I invented a computer program to do this, ERST. I don't know why I gave it a German name. I think it stands for Electronically Reproduced Simulated Text, or something horrible like that.

> “I'm **not** trying to colour **outside the line** on purpose. I just find it **more interesting**.”

You've always done this, inventing new strange instruments like the tape bow violin or the talking stick. Is this always a means to an end – I want that sound that doesn't exist – or an end in itself – the beautiful-looking art-piece?

A little bit of both. They're a bridge for me between sculpture and performance. They're hybrids. My work often is. Habeas Corpus is sculpture, performance and film. I like weird hybrid forms. I've never really fit very easily into a category because they have these uncomfortable elements that don't fit. I'm not trying to colour outside the line on purpose, it's just… it's interesting.

In 1976, you were briefly in a band with Arthur Russell.

He was in my band. Cello and drums. I loved Arthur's music. We got along really well. We didn't think that it was because we were [both] from [the Midwest]. It's funny what happens when an industry dies, a record industry. It has crumbled, that empire, and with it the ability to sit around for a year and make a record. There isn't really a substitute for spending that amount of time on something. You could do big things. But I try not dream of that. Just go and make something really simple with a pencil.

I also read you were Andy Kaufman's straight man at the end of the '70s. When he got to that part of his show where he said "I won't respect women until one of them comes up here and wrestles me down." That was your job, to wrestle him.

Yeah. And he wasn't pretending. It wasn't scary. Maybe metaphorically scary. I don't think I was ever really scared. I think if he thought he was going to hurt anyone he would have absolutely stopped. There was metaphor in everything Andy did. On the other hand, he was very hardcore and believed in everything he did. He was a kind person, and funny, but he loved using doubt and violence and fear and confusion. He was a master of all of that, of creating that and bringing it out. We'd go on field trips to Coney Island to test out his theories. We'd go on rides like the Roto-Whirl, where the bottom would drop out and plaster you to the side of the spinning cylinder, and right before the ride would start he'd be saying, "I don't think this ride is safe." People who were about to have fun on the ride, a lot of them got off.

You recorded your 1981 single O Superman through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and pressed up

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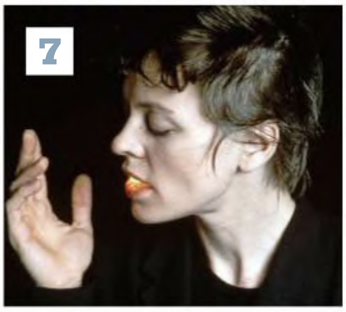
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"I feel the need to make something enormous and still." Laurie Anderson today, far from done yet.

> "When your **partner is gone** part of you goes with it, but **part of them stays** too… **Lou** is still a lot more real than many people I know, **because he came to play."**

just 100 copies. John Peel played it on Radio 1, you were signed to Warners and it went to Number 2 in the UK singles chart. Do you ever wonder what might have happened if John Peel had never played it?

I think I had a fairly anthropological interest in that. Or tried to. When you get something that you didn't dream of, it means a different thing than it would if you'd always dreamed of having it. I knew this would be dangerous if I wanted it to go on and on because this was a quirk of fate and it's like, even now, I'm the kind of artist who wants to get smaller rather than bigger. I don't ever want to open the Berlin office.

You perform O Superman during the Habeas Corpus evening shows. Those lines, "When love is gone, there's always justice. And when justice is gone, there's always force", really resonated with audiences. Similarly, when you played O Superman at Town Hall in New York City in the week after 9/11 and sang, "Here come the planes/They're American planes", you said you suddenly realised you were "singing about the present". Does it spook you out, how much that song continues to accrue meaning?

No it doesn't, because we're in the same war. Most people don't recognise that. And it's working kind of the same way. The same things keep breaking down, the same questions keep being asked. And force, justice and love are still major themes.

At the height of your popular attention, you made one of your biggest multi-media productions, the Home Of The Brave concert movie. There's so much going on in

that film, so many people on stage… Were you trying to hide from pop stardom behind all that spectacle?

I'm not sure I wanted to hide. No. During that time, and part of it comes from being a snob, when I went out to Warner Brothers to do my eight record deal, they sat me down in a room and said, "I want you to meet the other artists," and there were these guys like (*mimes slouchy, gurning, nose-picking urchin*) and I was like, Who are *these* guys? 'Artists' for me was like Duchamp. But they spoke about "the artists" with heavy quote marks around them. Wow, you're being so cynical. We're your marketing tools. We're not the artists.

On the other hand, Warners was an incredible label. They actually really liked singer-songwriters. They supported them. They supported me. They said, "We like your music and we'd like to put it out," and I thought, OK, why not? What is the downside of this? Plus, the other part of the snobbism was that I didn't like that artworks cost so much and I liked that anyone could buy a record. I got a lot of flak from the art world for signing with Warners. They were like, "You sold out. Why did you do that?" It only took about four or five months before it was called 'crossing over' and everyone did that. In the end I was happily floating between both worlds but I never quite belonged to either one.

One single from Home Of The Brave, Language Is A Virus (From Outer Space), was inspired by a line, a concept in William Burroughs' The Ticket That Exploded. Was he a big influence?

Definitely, because he really made me laugh. That guy was insanely funny. And dark. I toured with him and John Giorno on the club circuit in 1981 and we had a great time. It felt very vaudeville because Bill would always bring his cane and… wait a second… he brought guns. And he would go out and practise. In the back. That bothered me. That he liked guns, and that he didn't really like women. Those were the two things that put me off a bit. Otherwise, I loved him, because he was an old coot and hilarious and really cranky. And I have a real attraction to cranky people. I don't know why.

Am I allowed to mention Lou Reed at this point?

Oh, you are. You are. What makes you so cranky? I'm *interested* in that.

In 1991 you interviewed John Cage for a Buddhist magazine. Another influence?

More twins. Cage and Burroughs. Light and dark twins. I really fell in love with [Cage] in the last year of his life. He made a huge impression on me. So many old people are angry, bored and he was not like that for one second. He almost reminded me a little bit of the happiness of a dog, whose mouth is open, he's looking around, wow! He was dazzled by things, and that is probably the thing I most admire in humans, their ability to be dazzled. And he really was in weird circumstances. Merce [Cunningham] had left him, he's by himself, it's harder for him to go places… He said, "I can't pick up my suitcase." So I said, "I'll come with you!" I was so happy to spend time with him. He was beyond inspiring. His ability to see and appreciate the world as music, and as a completely finished artwork, I think about that all the time, and his ability to be in the present and not be worried about something or projecting something.

Tom Oldham

Tracks like Night In Baghdad and The Cultural Ambassador on your mid-'90s albums *Bright Red* and *The Ugly One With The Jewels* were direct responses to the Gulf War. That seemed to have a major effect on you. It was a multimedia war.

Well, all the wars. But, yeah, sure, it had its own music, its own graphics. It's like we've been saying, the one who gets the best focus is the one with the best story. Do you like the story, do you like the music that goes along with it?…

One of your biggest productions was 1999's Songs And Stories From Moby Dick. The album based on that show became something else entirely, 2001's *Life On A String*, and you later said, "If you ever get any idea about doing an opera based on a book you love, don't do it."

Yes, and I am so serious about that.

Did you get swallowed up by it?

Yes, just like a whale. I was the smaller fish. I was too worshipful. I loved it too much. That made me too shy and careful. You can't be shy and careful if you're going to carve up a whale. I wish I hadn't done that.

You seem to have this pattern though. After a huge project like that your next project is always stripped back, spare, simple…

THE ANDERSONTAPES

Essential Laurie.
By **Andrew Male.**

THE FIRST ONE

Big Science
(WARNER BOS, 1982)
★★★★

BIG SCIENCE
LAURIE ANDERSON

A flinty distillation of United States I-IV, her eight-hour multimedia performance-art epic about the US military industrial complex, Anderson's major label debut is a surprisingly moving and groovy collection, somewhere between minimalist post-punk electronica and a comic Robert Wilson spoken-word opera about plane crashes and dreams of falling in post-war America. Also, US pop's love affair with Auto-Tune can probably be traced back to Anderson's eerily seductive use of vocoder on this long-player.

THE AMBIENT ONE

Bright Red
(WARNER BROS, 1994)
★★★★

LAURIE ANDERSON
BRIGHT RED

"I learned something important when I worked on *Bright Red*," said producer, Brian Eno, recently. "I said, What do I really like here? I really like her voice. So I just listened to the voice until I wanted to hear something else happen." As a result, *Bright Red* is Anderson's most spare and spooky album. Written in the wake of the first Gulf War, it is a hypnotic, unsettling listen, like some deep, long, waking dream on "this tightrope made of sound".

THE DIVERSE ONE

Life On A String
(NONESUCH, 2001)
★★★★

Originally intended as an audio document of her vast, impressionistic 1999 performance-art piece, Songs And Stories From Moby Dick, Anderson's sixth studio LP became something else entirely: three numbers from Songs And Stories plus some of her most honest, emotional and stylistically varied compositions, including collaborations with Bill Frisell, Mitchell Froom and, on the sonically unsettling One Beautiful Evening, her boyfriend Lou Reed.

Yeah. It's a question of energy more than anything else because I like to make these beautiful simple things. Like… I'm doing these drawings for this show in Switzerland and… It was in the middle of the summer and I was kind of in trouble from Habeas Corpus. I had to get some therapy because I couldn't get these *pictures* out of my head. Do you remember the first time you saw the pictures from Abu Ghraib? This combination of pornography and violence? What is that? And you just can't get those images out of your head? That's what happened to me.

One of your stranger commissions must have been when you became NASA's first (and last) artist in residence in 2003. How did that come about?

Just a phone call. Why they thought I would be good PR for NASA is beyond me. It was definitely a PR move to get NASA into the public awareness more. Behind that was this idea that its military applications had become dominant in the public imagination, that they were just making rockets and shields and weren't looking out any more so much as looking down and spying on people and creating fast weapons and that's very true. They didn't really know what a NASA artist-in-residence did, so I just became a fly on the wall looking at them.

You don't need NASA's budget to make art. You can make visionary art, dangerous art, with a pencil and paper. Artists tend to forget that these days, especially now the Russians are in the market. You notice how many more works have gold dust or diamonds encrusted into the canvas. Extra added value – that's a nauseating development for me. But I got to poke around in the corners [at NASA] and any time you get to do that is great. This is what I love about being able to do what I do. Without war, I'd never have been friends with Mohammed, who's not an Al Qaeda operative but a goat-herder from Saudi Arabia. War gave me the chance to meet this person.

Was that the thinking behind 2003's Happiness? You prepared for that show by taking a job at McDonald's, working on an Amish farm, Zen river-rafting…

Yeah, get out of my rut. That's what I should do. I'm in a kind of rut right now. Do you have any good ideas?

Your work is about how you look at the world, and how that changes you. After Lou died you spoke very eloquently about his life and his passing. At the 30th Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony this year you said his death propelled you into "a magic world where you finally understand things that were complete mysteries up to that point."

Did I say that? Well, that's true. I have not rowed my boat back from that. I probably never will, because it's too wild, and I've met a lot of people who were suddenly very absorbed in a partnership, and then your partner is gone and part of you goes with it, but part of that partner stays too. It's a very, very weird thing to be part of and it becomes a very real thing. Also, when your partner is a really real person the way Lou… Lou is still, I have to say, a lot more real than many people I know because, he came to play. He was not goofing around.

What next?

Who am I? What am I? Those questions are always in the background of what I'm doing. And giant landscape paintings. I feel the need to make something enormous and still. Ⓜ

Laurie Anderson's Heart Of A Dog soundtrack CD is out now on Nonesuch.

do right men

dan penn and **spooner oldham** were one of the great songwriting partnerships of the 1960s, writing hits for Aretha Franklin , The Box Tops and Otis Redding. Then Martin Luther King's murder changed everything. **lois wilson** spoke to the duo about the good times, the bad times and all times in between.

The Ground Yo
(D. Penn & L. Oldh
ETTA JAM
Fame, BMI
Time: 2:51
63-PL
HE AIN'T GONNA DO RIGHT
(Penn-Oldham)
BARBARA LYNN
Arr. by Spooner Oldham &
Charles Chalmers Prod.
by Spooner Oldham
ATLANTIC RECORDING CORP., 1841 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y.
Time
Arranged
Dan Penn
Chips Moman
THE DARK END OF THE STREET
(C. Moman-D. Penn)
JAMES CARR
DISTRIBUTED BY BELL RECORDS INC., N.Y.C.
FAME
RECORDING CO.
1001
Time: 2:27
JUST AS I AM
(L.Oldham/D.Pen
DAN PENN
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A DIVISION OF

LEFT THE WATER RUNNING
(Dan Penn-Rick Hall-Oscar Franks)
OTIS REDDING
209
BIG "O" DISTRIBUTORS INC.
MEMPHIS, TENN.
MGM

Ace Records (3), Courtesy of the Artist

OLDWAX Records
321
TIME: 2:45
SHOUT
UP TIGHT GOOD WOMAN
(OLDHAM - PENN)
SPENCER WIGGINS
PRODUCED BY QUINTON CLAUNCH
RUDOLPH RUSSELL
Fame RECORDS
SPECIAL
R.P.M.
BANG RE
IS A BLUE BIRD BLUE
(Dan Penn)
DAN PENN
Produced by Rick Hall
A-11576-MO
DISTRIBUTED BY ATLANTIC RE
S, 1841 BROADWA
DO RIGHT WOMAN —
DO RIGHT MAN
(Penn - Moman)
ARETHA FRANKLIN

Sweet inspiration: Dan Penn (left) and Spooner Oldham take a break from the studio; (insets) their works, and a later version of Fame studios, Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

DAN PENN AND SPOONER OLDHAM STILL REMEMBER THE day everything changed. "I was in American Studios in Memphis working on The Box Tops," recalls Penn. "The producer Chips Moman called me up, said, 'Get out of there, they've shot Martin Luther King'." Well I knew what that meant, and by the time I turned everything off and got out to my car and headed home, you could taste the anger and confusion."

"They hung an effigy of Jerry Wexler at the National Association of Radio and Television Announcers convention," remembers Oldham. "We drove up outside but I was too scared to go in. People were traumatised. It was unspoken, but it was in the air."

We are half way through an afternoon which began with Penn and Oldham welcoming MOJO with broad grins and warm hugs at Shoreditch's Ace Hotel restaurant. After 50-plus years as songwriters and session men, the duo are good at blending into the background, just two regular guys, long on the road. Stocky, with short-cropped grey hair and pressed dark blue shirt, Penn resembles a seen-it-all salesman from some post-war US film noir, while Oldham, stick-thin, twinkly eyes, mussed-up hair, scruffily cool in blue and white dot shirt, could easily be cast as his partner's seasoned huckster pal from the badder part of town.

Now in their early seventies, the pair easily assume the role of avuncular anecdotists, sipping black coffee, keen to relive happy 1960s memories that took them from a tiny studio above a drugstore in downtown Florence, Alabama – where Rick Hall ignored racial boundaries to craft the nascent Muscle Shoals sound – to the top of the charts, writing songs for James & Bobby Purify (I'm Your Puppet), Aretha Franklin (Do Right Woman, Do Right Man), James Carr (The Dark End Of The Street) Percy Sledge (Out Of Left Field) and Otis Redding (You Left The Water Running) that became classics central to soul music's flowering.

But now the mood in the room is tense and uneasy. Oldham looks at the floor and starts picking at some dry skin on his hands. Penn shuffles in his seat, takes a deep breath, his voice a whisper. "It scared everybody," he says. "It did. There were guys standing around with guns, looking threatening. Before Martin Luther King's death, it didn't matter if you were black or white, there was no racial tension in Memphis, we were all the same. But after, that was the end of the golden age, the end of R&B's journey too."

DAN PENN'S R&B JOURNEY BEGAN AT the age of 12, in 1953, with the discovery of Ray Charles and Bobby Bland. "My father played acoustic guitar, my mother the piano," he says. "We had church music and hillbilly music at home, but we also had WLAC, the Nashville radio station, that's where I heard those guys. It was them that made me want to get involved. I was hooked the moment I heard them."

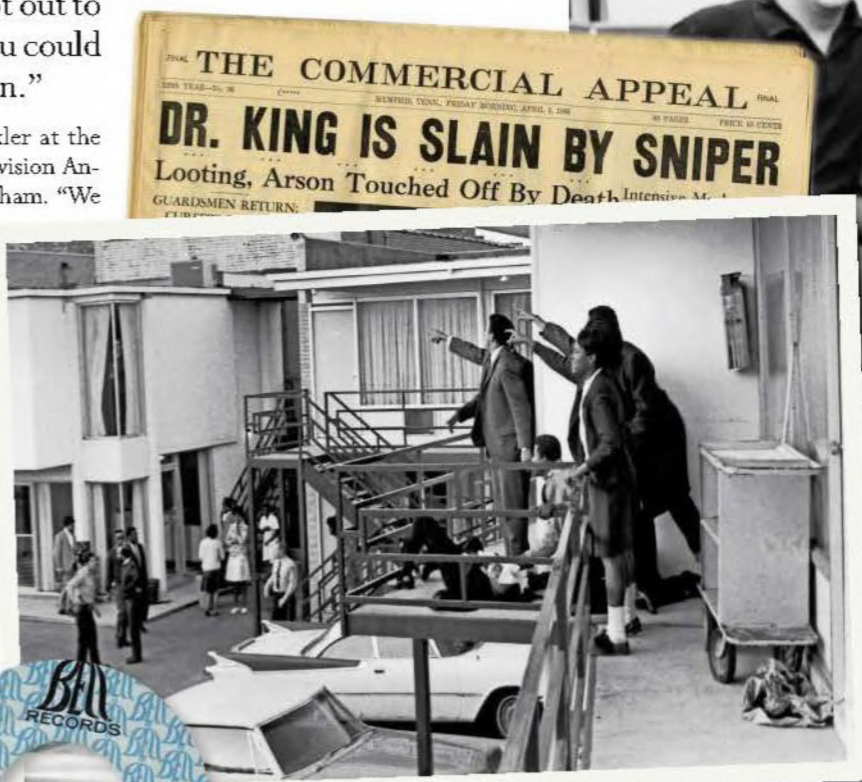
By the time Penn hit 16 in 1957 he'd made his name as the singer in The Rhythm Swingsters, a rock'n'roll outfit in his hometown of Vernon, Alabama, which performed at square dances across the South. When their saxophonist Billy Sherrill left for Florence to find a producer by the name of Rick Hall, Penn followed.

"I'd never been in a studio before," Penn says, "didn't know what to expect, but I drove the 100 miles and met everybody I ever knew there – there was Rick Hall, Donnie Fritts, I met Spooner there too. That sure was the place to be." Penn brought a song with him. Is A Blue Bird Blue made it into Conway Twitty's hands and the country singer took it into the pop Top 40, in 1960. Penn, understandably, was big news from then on. "I was in my teens, of course it went to my head," he says. "I thought I had it made."

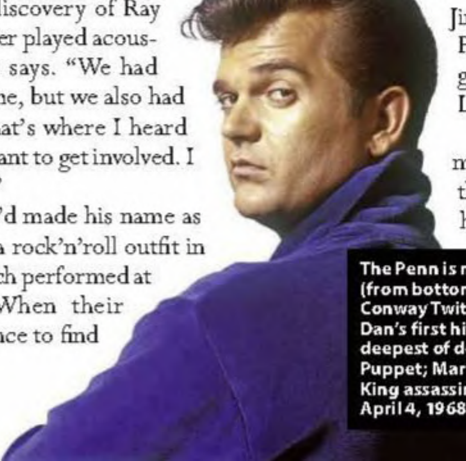
Spooner Oldham was just 17 when he first met Penn. Born Dewey Lindon Oldham in Center Star, Alabama, in 1943, the self-taught pianist had arrived in Florence to study music at the university. When Hall hired him for a session, he swapped theory for practice and became central to Hall's in-house band The Swampers, providing background for Arthur Alexander, Jimmy Hughes, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin and Percy Sledge – it's Oldham's unforgettable Farfisa organ introduction that sets up Sledge's When A Man Loves A Woman.

Neither Oldham nor Penn remember their first meeting, nor when they started writing together. "But the song that made us think we may have something here was I'm Your Puppet," says Oldham.

Recorded by James & Bobby Purify in 1965 at Fame Studios, this doleful yearning ballad gave the duo their breakthrough pop hit, reaching the US

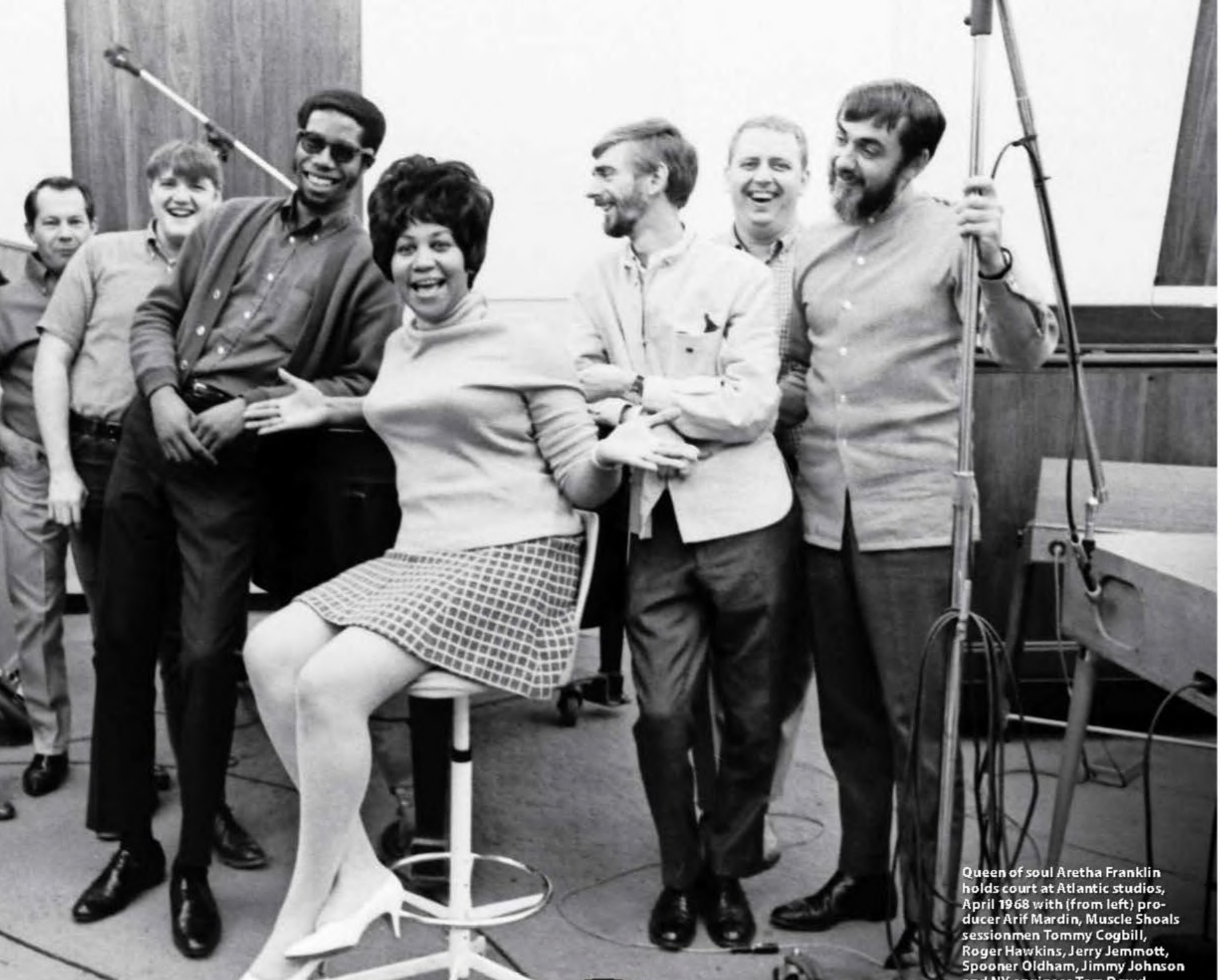

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL
DR. KING IS SLAIN BY SNIPER
Looting, Arson Touched Off By Death
GUARDSMEN RETURN

BELL RECORDS
I'M YOUR PUPPET
JAMES & BOBBY PURIFY
GOLDWAX Records
THE DARK END OF THE STREET
JAMES CARR
M·G·M
IS A BLUE BIRD BLUE
CONWAY



The Penn is mighty: (from bottom) Conway Twitty and Dan's first hit; the deepest of deep soul; Puppet; Martin Luther King assassinated, April 4, 1968.

Getty Images (3)



Queen of soul Aretha Franklin holds court at Atlantic studios, April 1968 with (from left) producer Arif Mardin, Muscle Shoals sessionmen Tommy Cogbill, Roger Hawkins, Jerry Jemmott, Spooner Oldham, Jimmy Johnson and NY engineer Tom Dowd.

Billboard Top 10 and R&B Top 5 the next year.

Like most of the future classics they went on to write, "it came out of nowhere," says Penn. "We ate dinner at this barbecue place across from Fame studio, then went back, I broke out this cheap 12-string, cooked up the rhythm, Spooner got behind the piano and the magic happened, who knows where it came from, but I was walking around singing The Puppet, and we cut the demo right then and there."

As it was the first record Penn engineered, he was outraged when the Purifys stamped their own authority on the song. "They changed The Puppet to I'm Your Puppet, they sung it too fast, turned it into this Sam And Dave-type thing, I didn't like it. Then when the cheque came in I gave it another listen, and then of course I loved it. I did learn a vital lesson though: it may be your song but don't hold on too tight to it, singers can be right sometimes."

Spooner Oldham remembers the excitement of watching it rise up the charts. "We were recording through the day, writing two or three songs every night, we were working hard so it gave me a real boost to get that first hit. It opened the doors and it seemed like for the next few years either me or Dan or both of us together had records racing up one chart or another, whether it was pop, R&B, jazz, we were on a roll."

ATLANTIC
45 R.P.M.
45-2465
DO RIGHT WOMAN - DO RIGHT MAN
THE SWEET INSPIRATIONS

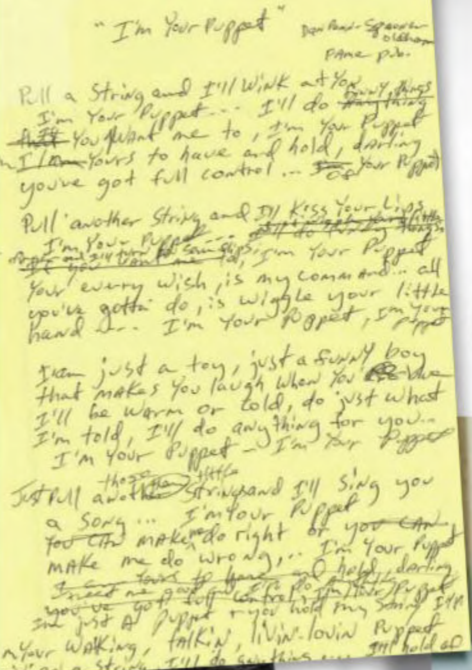
"They sang I'm Your Puppet too fast. I didn't like it. Then the cheque came in."
Dan Penn

They certainly were. After moving to Memphis in 1966 to produce – "I'd learned a lot from watching Rick Hall but he paid me to write. He didn't say no when I asked him to produce, but he didn't say yes either" – Penn teamed with Chips Moman at American Studios. Oldham followed in 1967 after keyboardist Barry Beckett filled his place in The Swampers.

Penn and Moman struck gold with the first song they co-wrote together. A wounded ballad, characterised by resignation and ardour, The Dark End Of The Street was written in a Nashville motel room during a break in a poker game. When sung by James Carr, it became a defining moment in deep soul.

However, according to Penn, Carr initially had trouble getting the vocal down. "Chips said, 'Dan, go out there and show him how it goes.' So I went out and I said, Let me try it. He was like, 'What?' You could see what he was thinking, so I gave it my all and he had it the very next take. Then I went out and did the harmony – I'm the black woman on the end with the high voice. I couldn't do that now, I can't go girl today."

The second song Penn and Moman wrote, Do Right Woman, ➢



"I'm Your Puppet" Dan Penn - Spooner Oldham
Fame pub.

Pull a String and I'll Wink at You funny things
I'm Your Puppet... I'll do ~~anything~~
~~All~~ You want me to, I'm Your Puppet
~~I am~~ Yours to have and hold, darling
you've got full control... ~~I'm~~ of Your Puppet

Pull another String and I'll Kiss Your Lips ~~[illegible]~~
I'm Your Puppet... ~~I'll do funny things~~
~~[illegible]~~ I'm Your Puppet
Your every wish, is my command... all
you've gotta do, is wiggle your little
hand ... I'm Your Puppet, I'm Your puppet

I am just a toy, just a funny boy
that makes you laugh when you ~~are~~ blue
I'll be warm or cold, do just what
I'm told, I'll do anything for you...
I'm Your Puppet — I'm Your Puppet

Just Pull ~~another~~ those little Strings and I'll sing you
a song... I'm Your Puppet
~~You can~~ make me do right or ~~you can~~
make me do wrong,... I'm Your Puppet
~~Yours to have and hold, darling~~
~~you've got full control~~ [illegible] Puppet
I'm just a puppet & you hold my string I'm
your walking, talkin', livin-lovin Puppet
[illegible] on a string, I'll do anything [illegible] I'll hold on

mala
MALA 593
TIME: 2:35
PRESS MUSIC CO. BMI
CRY LIKE A BABY
(PENN-OLDHAM)
THE BOX TOPS
PRODUCED BY DAN PENN

Pulling the strings: (above) Dan Penn and Muscle Shoals' maven Rick Hall; (clockwise from top left) scrawled lyrics to I'm Your Puppet; James & Bobby Purify; The Box Tops; Aretha with Jerry Wexler (left) and husband Ted White; Spooner Oldham peers over Wilson Pickett's shoulder on the singer's first visit to Fame, 1966; Spooner, good vibes man; James Carr, Penn led him to The Dark End Of The Street.

< Do Right Man, was another masterstroke. Written "in the blink of an eye" at Moman's house after a quail supper, it helped secure Aretha's legacy as the queen of soul.

"Spooner, he played Do Right Woman to Jerry Wexler," says Penn. "He took Aretha down to Fame to record her first session for Atlantic, Chips gets the call to produce and there's no way I'm not going down there, because you just knew history was going to be made. They cut I Never Loved A Man, Spooner's playing organ on it, everybody's slapping each other on the back because it sounds so damn good. Jerry says, 'Let's cut Do Right Woman'."

But in the short time it took Penn to write the words for the bridge, Hall and Aretha's then husband and manager Ted White had come to blows

"People started drinking," remembers Penn. "Rick got a little tight, her husband got a little tight, something was said, it got ugly and they had a fight. Jerry Wexler then takes her out of Muscle Shoals and back to New York. I think, Well that's the end of that, I'm not going to make any money on the back of my pitiful demo. I mean, I'm squeaking away up high in Aretha's key, the band, they can't seem to get anything going behind me, it was awful. Aretha didn't even try to sing it."

> "For a few years me or Dan or both of us had records racing up the charts."
> Spooner Oldham

When the track was eventually finished, Wexler invited Penn and Moman to hear it. "We fly to New York and we're in the control room at Atlantic and it's like, Wow! Aretha starts to sing, her sisters come in behind her, she's playing piano, I thought, Man, they sure captured the magic here."

THE LAST TIME PENN AND OLDHAM CAPTURED THE magic together was a month before Martin Luther King's death in March '68 when the pair collaborated on Cry Like A Baby, a US pop and R&B Number 2. "I'd had a big hit on The Letter with The Box Tops which I'd produced and the record company wanted a follow-up," explains Penn. "Now I don't write no sequels but I wanted to repeat the success to prove I was a producer and The Letter hadn't been just luck. But nothing was coming so I called up Spooner and the pair of us started writing. We were looking hard for two days and nights and still nothing was coming, I said, Let's forget it and go eat."

At Porky's, a favourite hang-out across the street, Oldham put his head in his hands. "I said, You know Dan, I could just cry like a baby. I meant it too, I was really feeling the pressure, then Dan said, 'That's it, that's what we're looking for.' He said, 'Keep the food,' and we rushed back to the studio."

"By the time we're at the studio we've got, 'When I think about the good love you gave me, I cry like a baby'," says Penn. "I told Spooner to run for the organ, I turned the machines back on, put the tape on and while the tape was turning we cut it as we wrote it. At 10 the next morning with the session all set up, everything looked just rosy. Then Martin Luther King's death signalled the end."

After March '68 Oldham moved to Los Angeles, becoming a keyboardist for hire in the studio and on the road working with Jackson Browne, Flying Burrito Brothers, Bob Dylan, Neil Young and, most recently, Keith Richards. Penn remained in Memphis, opening his own studio, Beautiful Sounds, and recording his 1973 debut solo album, the brilliant *Nobody's Fool*. In 1994, in Nashville, where he lives today, he recorded its follow-up, *Do Right Man*, and with Oldham played a series of promotional gigs marking the first time the pair had gone out as a duo. 1999 saw the release of their acclaimed live album, *Moments From This Theatre*. Back in July it was reissued as a CD/DVD deluxe edition, supported by a four-date UK tour, including a night of storytelling and songs at London's Union Chapel where Penn delivers his songs on acoustic guitar, as they were written, slow and sad, wringing every last drop of emotion from I'm Your Puppet; Spooner's keyboards, warm and church-like, make the perfect accompaniment. It's a stirring experience.

After the show, following rapturous applause and a standing ovation, their self-effacement remains.

"If you hang around long enough people will eventually say you're pretty good," shrugs Penn. "But we had fun."

"It's good to be out there in front of people because you're putting your heart and feeling into the songs and people relate to them and it's like it's day one again," adds Oldham. "You're back in the moment when you first wrote the songs and first played them. We never expected to be able to do that, we didn't know the songs would last."

"I was always looking to do something different," says Penn. "There didn't seem any point in writing like other folks, and with Spooner I got to do that. He'd play his piano and I'd hear an orchestra, I'd be singing from my gut, going places no one had ever been before and he'd play a note and the song would be done."

"It was about being exploratory as writers and musicians," agrees Oldham, "as Dan says, always looking to do something different, even if it turned out wrong, it didn't matter, but you know for the most part, it turned out pretty right."

Spooner Oldham's Pot Luck (Light In The Attic) and Dan Penn & Spooner Oldham's Moments From This Theatre: Live (Proper) are out now.

Ace Records, Courtesy Fame Records, Getty Images (6)

double trouble

dan penn and spooner oldham pick their solo favourites and their finest collaboration.

dan penn

Nobody's Fool

Bell, 1973

"I had a 16-track studio with no one using it, I thought I better do something so I cut myself," Penn says of this genuine lost album, written with Elvis Presley in mind. Sitting at the point where country meets soul, with intricate string and horn arrangements and a band led by Oldham's organ flurry, it's Penn's performances that captivate the most: his voice, emotionally nuanced and deeply soulful, breathing life into songs about bruised hearts and social breakdown.

spooner oldham

Pot Luck

Family Productions, 1972

"No one was much interested in it when it came out, not sure anyone even got to hear it much, but I was playing as a part of the house band at Ed Cobb's Producer's Workshop in LA. We cut Liberace and then someone said it was my turn to make a record," says Oldham of his sole solo album. With songs written and worked up in the studio, it's raw and spontaneous with Oldham's crushed vocals plaintive, mournful and rooted in gospel. The high point is Penn and Oldham's rousing Southern spiritual The Lord Loves A Rolling Stone.

the sweet inspirations

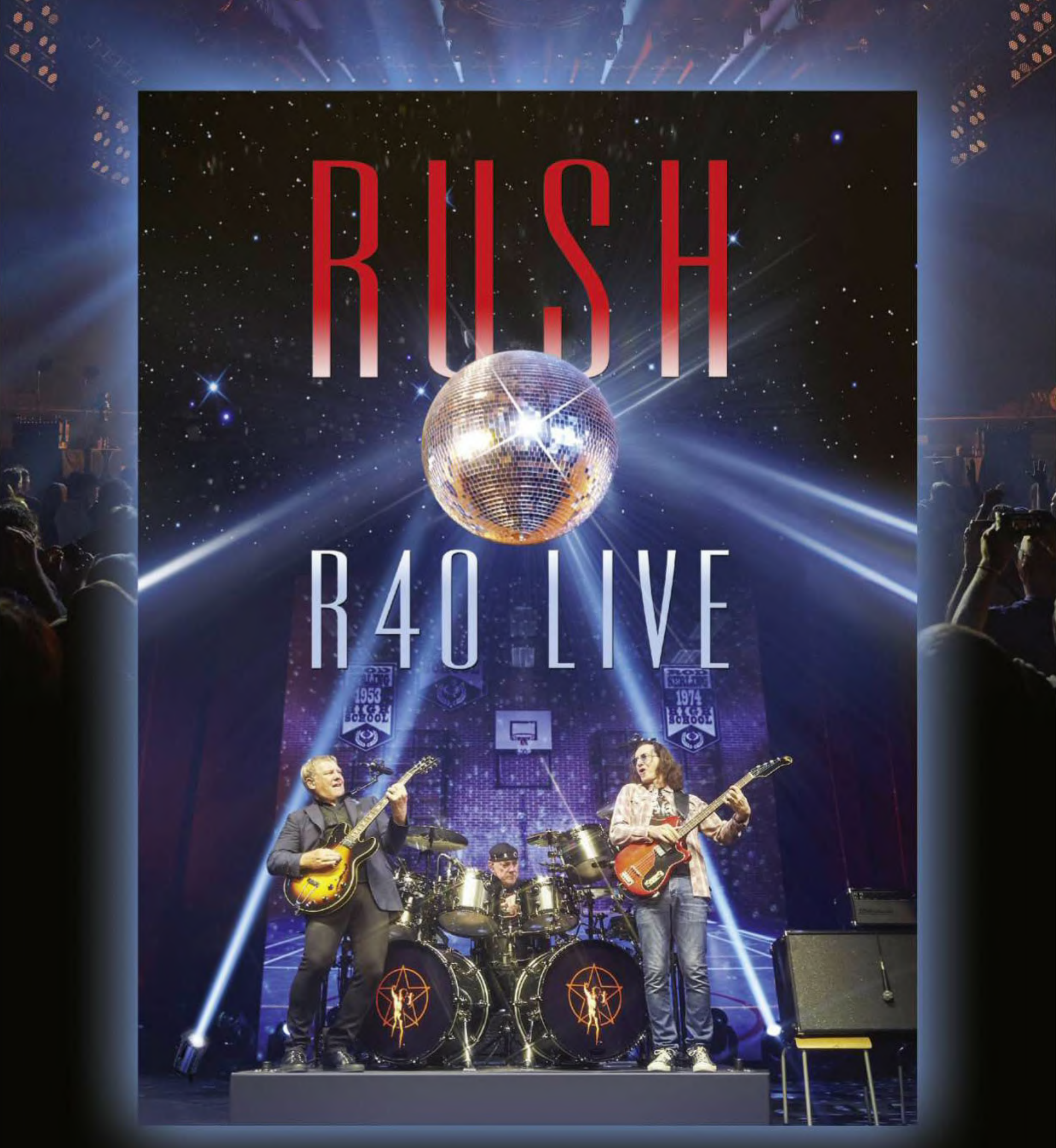
Sweet Inspiration

Atlantic single, 1968

Spooner: "I had met The Sweet Inspirations from working with Aretha. They were cutting a record on their own in American. I was a big fan, I loved the way they sung, so I went down to watch but the songs they were cutting were awful. I said to Dan, Let's write them something. We went into the office, there was a guitar in there, Dan picked it up, I started riffing on their name, they'd just come up with that earlier in the day, a few minutes later we had the song done."

Dan: "We took it into them, they loved it, they started learning it straight away. I got behind the board and we cut it in one. It was magic, a real high-point for both of us."

As told to Lois Wilson



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THE MOJO REVIEW OF THE YEAR

2015
VIRGINIA

THE BEST 50 ALBUMS

STARRING *JULIA HOLTER NEW ORDER TAME IMPALA YOUNG FATHERS BLUR KENDRICK LAMAR SUFJAN STEVENS JAMIE XX GAZ COOMBES FOALS...*

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Collage by Mark Cavendish Wagstaff

2015

BLUES

Compiled by TONY RUSSELL

1. **BUDDY GUY** *Born To Play Guitar* (RCA)
2. **SHEMEKIA COPELAND** *Outskirts Of Love* (Alligator)
3. **IAN SIEGAL** *One Night In Amsterdam* (Nugene)
4. **BETH HART** *Better Than Home* (Provogue)
5. **CHRIS JAMES & PATRICK RYNN** *Trouble Don't Last* (Vizztone)
6. **SNOOKS EAGLIN** *New Orleans Street Singer + That's All Right* (Soul Jam)
7. **JOE BONAMASSA** *Muddy Wolf At Red Rocks* (Provogue)
8. **LIGHTNIN' SLIM** *I'm A Rolling Stone* (Jasmine)
9. **TAMPA RED** *Dynamite!: The Unsung Hero Of The Blues* (Ace)
10. **THE CASH BOX KINGS** *Holding Court* (Blind Pig)

SOUNDTRACKS

Compiled by JONNY TRUNK & ANDREW MALE

EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE

1. **JESSICA CURRY** *Everybody's Gone To The Rapture* (Sony)
2. **JED KURZEL** *Slow West* (Music On Vinyl)
3. **RYUICHI SAKAMOTO** *Furyo* (Milan)
4. **BRONNT INDUSTRIES KAPITAL** *Turksib* (I Own You)
5. **CAT'S EYES** *The Duke Of Burgundy* (RAF/Caroline)
6. **DEBBIE WISEMAN** *Wolf Hall* (Silva Screen)
7. **GEOFF BARROW & BEN SALISBURY** *Ex Machina* (Invada)
8. **DISASTERPEACE** *It Follows* (Milan)
9. **MIKAEL TARIVERDIEV** *Film Music* (Earth)
10. **VARIOUS** *Holy Mountain* (Real Gone / FK)

Hello Caleb: Alicia Vikander in Ex Machina.

Kurt Vile
50

KURT VILE

B'LIEVE I'M GOIN DOWN…

Matador

Often tagged as a 'slacker hero', Kurt Vile is actually the latest in a long line of great American songwriters using wry observation to dissect himself and paint resigned pictures of the world as he sees it. His sixth album sees him adding depth (more banjo, more piano) and fine-tuning his melodic style on his most satisfying set to date. *PA*

Start with: Pretty Pimpin'

IBEYI

IBEYI

XL

Daughters of famed Cuban percussionist Anga Diaz, 20-year-old Paris-born twins Lisa-Kaindé and Naomi Diaz were signed to XL by label boss Richard Russell after seeing them on a YouTube video. He helped the sisters sculpt a richly textured, post-R&B sound that frames carefully interwoven vocals. This is a meditative and gracefully debut with an oblique pop heart. *PA*

Start with: River

DAVID GILMOUR

RATTLE THAT LOCK

Columbia

Moody, melodic and everything the former Floydian need no longer be, this perfectly played, polished opus offers precision songwriting – courtesy of the distinguished axeman and his lyricist wife – and enough hooks, space and substance to equal *Wall*-era Floyd, minus the self-loathing. Completely, unexpectedly grand. *DD*

Start with: Rattle That Lock

DEERHUNTER

FADING FRONTIER

4AD

Following a car-hits-band-leader calamity, Bradford Cox led Deerhunter's most becalmed and succinct album, as if the painkillers hadn't yet worn off. Not that promoting their dreamier aspects and INXS influences reduced Cox's trademark heavy-lidded, psych drama; below the surface gloss lurk all manner of nightmare visions, agonising doubt and residual anger. *MA*

Start with: Snakeskin

TOBIAS JESSO JR

GOON

True Panther Sounds

Inspired by heartbreak and disappointment in Hollywood, Jesso Jr returned to his native Vancouver to set tales of woe to Beatles-like melodies. The result is a '70s singer-songwriter album for the modern age: heartfelt, familiar, and very sweet. *WH*

Start with: How Could You Babe

THE WEEKND

BEAUTY BEHIND THE MADNESS

Island

The Weeknd's commercial breakthrough, helped by the use of the sumptuously sorrowful Earned It on the Fifty Shades… soundtrack, found Abel Tesfaye playing the vampiric sybarite, tormented by his desires, as the music – from overdriven slow jams to club bangers for chronic anhedonics – refashioned R&B in his image. *PL*

Start with: In The Night

RYLEY WALKER

PRIMROSE GREEN

Dead Oceans

Building on the psych-folk guitar roots of Bert Jansch, Davy Graham and John Martyn, this 24-year-old Midwesterner spirals into wild complexities of sweet melody and song. Like travelling from a known landmark to some new strange forest of stoned beauty. *AM*

Start with: The High Road

MARK RONSON
UPTOWN SPECIAL
43

MARK RONSON

UPTOWN SPECIAL

Columbia

Ronson in his element: playing on the boundary of ersatz and authentic, mixing sophisto-pop with '80s funk and curating a wonder cast: Kevin Parker, Bruno Mars, Stevie Wonder, and 'on' druggy lyrics, novelist Michael Chabon. Uptown Funk is but the tip of the iceberg. *DE*

Start with: Summer Breaking

A FOOL TO CARE BOZ SCAGGS
42

BOZ SCAGGS

A FOOL TO CARE

429

Two years after *Memphis*, Scaggs delivers another strong set with producer Steve Jordan, from soul covers (I'm So Proud, Full Of Fire) to versions of Bobby Charles' Small Town Talk and Richard Hawley's There's A Storm A Comin'. Fine as a Scaggs Vineyard wine. *GB*

Start with: I'm So Proud

KASAMI WASHINGTON

THE EPIC

Brainfeeder

Tenor saxophonist and his ensemble never let up on a thrilling jazz triple CD that rewards as strongly as it demands. Powerful rhythm section (two basses, two drummers), screeds of melody and invention from all soloists, material sourcing Coltrane, Ornette, Miles – who needs more? *GB*

Start with: Change Of The Guard

ALABAMA SHAKES SOUND & COLOR
40

ALABAMA SHAKES

SOUND & COLOR

Rough Trade

The easy path for Alabama Shakes would have been to stick with the soulful blues-rock of their debut, *Boys & Girls*. Instead, they created a kaleidoscopic tour de force – space-funk, garage rave-ups, atmospheric haze. Sound and colour, for sure. *AL*

Start with: Gimme All Your Love

KEITH RICHARDS CROSSEYED HEART
39

KEITH RICHARDS

CROSSEYED HEART

Republic

No red-light fever here, just studio-time as revelrous lock-in and roll tape, Keef's X-Pensive Winos gamely necking his rickety bar-room ballads, barely-conceived rockers, and brushes with the law. On the surface, Keef as Pirate Of The Caribbean; underneath, something darker: a Dartford lad back at The Crossroads. *JMcN*

Start with: Robbed Blind

AT FLICKS
THURSDAY MAY 24th
A GREAT 5 PIECE
HOLLYWOOD BRATS
HOW BIZ
RCA
Esso

Gagging for it: Hollywood Brats in their briefly flaring pomp, with Andrew Matheson applying lippy (top left).

BOOK OF THE YEAR

SICK ON YOU

ANDREW MATHESON (Ebury Publishing)

MOJO TOME OF 2015 WAS A COMIC TALE OF GROT AND FAILURE BY ANDREW MATHESON, FRONTMAN OF FAILED PRE-PUNK PROPHETS, THE HOLLYWOOD BRATS. ANDREW MALE TOLD HIM THE GOOD NEWS.

Sick On You is MOJO's book of 2015
Bloody hell! That's really quite something!

When did you start writing the book? What was the spark?
Two Februarys ago. People had always asked me about "those days" and I'd tell them something and they either wouldn't believe it or they'd just laugh, so I just decided one day, it was winter, to just get cracking, so from February to June, I wrote. I had diaries, and also Brady from the band gave me diaries, so I could cross-reference everything, even to hours. I just began at the beginning and it all rolled quite quickly.

There are a lot of bad rock memoirs out there. Did you know the pitfalls to avoid?
What sort of pitfalls? Boredom? Self-glorifying sludge? No, no, none of that. None of that wise reflection. I don't read rock memoirs. They're dreadful. I wrote it all from the perspective of the time, just cracked on as though it was happening then and there. A big white surfboard table, all my notes and diaries, a typewriter and a bottle of whisky.

This early '70s period of British rock history hasn't really been written about before in such grotty detail.
Yeah… and some of the stories are so absurd, like us being owned by the Mob, it had to be out there. Due to the involvement of various individuals there were stories I had to leave out and I was bugged about that. The stories and anecdotes are absolutely spot-on true, not embellished one whit and they were like, "No, no, he's lawyered up to here."

Given the Hollywood Brats have never had a career revival or hip rediscovery, was it hard to get people interested in the book?
No. From the time I submitted it, to the time I signed the contact was 11 days. I Googled "best publisher in the planet" it came up with Random House UK, so I sent it to them and 11 days later I was on the dotted line. Why? They liked the title, and the more I started talking about it and sending pages, they liked the stories. It flew against all those rules you hear: "No one will accept anything without an agent…" I never bothered with anything like that. Just go.

That's very similar to the Andrew Matheson in the book, who also never listened to advice.
Well, you're young and stupid, and out of that stupidity you make all kinds of mistakes, but that's the only way new things get discovered. People with advice, even if they mean well, they might be wrong. And they were.

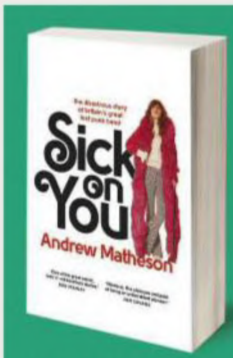
The book ends just as punk is starting. Was there an unhappiness about the fact that you were ahead of your time and people came in your wake and were successful with a similar sound?
I remember being really disappointed but I don't remember being bitter. I don't remember sitting around gnashing my teeth. I was perfectly happy for these people like The Clash. I hated most of them, of course. Also, I'd lost the drive to continue.

What was the rest of your 70s like?
I was in terrible, terrible shape [but] I wanted to play football, so I went away, got into shape, got a little sniff at playing football to a certain level in North America, then thought, "Right, I've got to get a job." I wrote a song, got it to a record company and bingo I had a record deal in '78 with Ariola and suddenly I was back in it again. I made a record, had a marriage that blew up, went to Los Angeles in 1980 to write for a film. That two weeks in LA turned into eight years. I had a recurring role in a legal soap… bits and bobs and then 1988-ish I signed a big publishing deal with MCA and bingo, I was back in it again.

Cherry Red reissued the *Hollywood Brats* LP in 1980 and I think have always kept it in print. Is that right?
Well, Iain McNay, who started Cherry Red, was with Bell Records, and he was in a board meeting where they were discussing signing the Hollywood Brats. He was pulling for us then, and they basically said, are you out of your mind? Then Clive Davis put the big hammer down, said he didn't want this trash on his label. Then, a few years later, Ian had his own record company, said he was going to right that wrong, and he did.

Are there other books planned?
There's another one akin to this as well as a crime novel in the works. Plus, I'm writing the script for Sick On You.

How quickly did that come about?
I don't want to sound like a big-headed twit but I always knew. There should be something concrete to announce quite soon.



AND THE REST...

2. **HOW MUSIC GOT FREE**
STEPHEN WITT
(Viking)

3. **SAM PHILLIPS: THE MAN WHO INVENTED ROCK 'N' ROLL**
PETER GURALNICK
(W&N)

4. **DIFFERENT EVERY TIME: THE AUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY OF ROBERT WYATT**
MARCUS O'DAIR
(Serpent's Tail)

5. **GOOD NIGHT AND GOOD RIDDANCE**
DAVID CAVANAGH
(Faber & Faber)

6. **DYLAN GOES ELECTRIC! NEWPORT, SEEGER, DYLAN, AND THE NIGHT THAT SPLIT THE '60S**
ELIJAH WALD
(Dey Street)

7. **1966: THE YEAR THE DECADE EXPLODED**
JON SAVAGE
(Faber & Faber)

8. **PSYCHEDELIA AND OTHER COLOURS**
ROB CHAPMAN
(Faber & Faber)

9. **GIRL IN A BAND**
KIM GORDON
(Faber & Faber)

10. **LIFE AFTER DARK**
DAVE HASLAM
(Simon & Schuster)

Courtesy Gered Mankowitz/Ebury Publishing, photograph © 2015 by Universal Pictures

Getting it right: Robert Plant (left) and Jimmy Page at their 1975 peak.

REISSUE OF THE YEAR CODA (Atlantic)

LED ZEPPELIN

LONG CONSIDERED THE LEAST-ESSENTIAL LED ZEPPELIN RELEASE, WITH TWO NEW DISCS OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL, 2015's *CODA* REISSUE BECAME A FITTING TRIBUTE TO A GREAT BAND AND THEIR LATE DRUMMER. JIMMY PAGE UNPACKS "THE MOTHER OF ALL *CODA*'S WITH PHIL ALEXANDER.

"THE MATERIAL on the companion disc presents a portal to the time of the recording of Led Zeppelin," reads a quote from Jimmy Page that appears in each of the reissues of the band's nine studio albums, outlining the guitarist's desire to offer new insight into the working process which Zep employed during their 12-year career.

Once the remastering of the entire catalogue had been completed from the original tapes by Page, the year-long reissue campaign began in earnest in June 2014 with the release of *Led Zeppelin I*, *II* and *III*, all of which benefited from single companion discs which (with the exception of I) offered near-alternate versions of the albums themselves. The reissues of 2015 largely continued that approach but it is *Coda* – the very last album in Zep's canon – that offered up the greatest spoils for Zep fans.

Initially released in November 1982, two years after the death of John Bonham, as a contractual obligation ("We had an album owing," explains Page), *Coda* has never been high on the list of must-have Zep albums. And yet, the addition of two companion discs featuring 15 additional tracks has transformed it into nothing short of an essential release. It also provided Page with the opportunity to revisit *Coda* without the sense of loss that pervaded the original.

"Putting together a posthumous album to John at the time was difficult, but we had to do it," nods Page. "This time around, though, the approach was very different. You can feel that when you hear it. I wanted this to be the mother of all *Coda*s and to reflect every aspect of the band."

Of *Coda*'s 'new' unreleased material, the first track to surface, in June 2015, was the strutting Sugar Mama, receiving a wealth of media attention in the process ("I can't believe the radio play it got!" smiles Page). Dating back to the band's sessions for the first album, it was recorded at Olympic Studio on October 3, 1968. Indeed, the inclusion of such forensic information throughout the Zep reissue series rights the wrongs of previous re-releases where recording dates were attributed in something of a haphazard way.

"It was important to get everything right because so much stuff out there is wrong," says Page, a stickler for such detail. "Everything had to be definitive this time."

While the revamped *Coda* includes a number of unreleased gems – the versions of Friends and Four Hands (aka Four Sticks) recorded with the Bombay Orchestra on October 19, 1972, when Page and singer Robert Plant travelled to India – Page remains inordinately proud of John Bonham's percussive centrepiece, Bonzo's Montreux. Recorded at Mountain Studios in Switzerland, between the release of *Presence* and the sessions that spawned *In Through The Out Door*, the second version of the track is included on *Coda* shows the final mix being constructed.

"John was out there in Montreux. So I thought, 'I'll go out and see him but we'll also do some recording'," recalls Page of the session that took place on September 12, 1976. "We'd talked about [recording] a drum orchestra thing. There were two points of reference for him: the Sandy Nelson records – because they were all about the drums – plus, samba school music. [Manager] Peter Grant had been down to Brazil to check out the possibility of us playing there, and brought back this cassette of the music that got played before the football games. We wanted to do something that was in the spirit of all of that."

Alongside the hired timbales and congas, Page himself also introduced a piece of technology to the session.

"I'd taken delivery of something that was fresh off the blocks, a harmonizer. This particular model had a setting that sounded like a steel drum so I knew I was going to put that over the top. John loved the sound of that machine, and we spent a whole day just working on that track. But the mix on the *Coda* companion is without the steel drums, so you can hear the real drums pulsating. It sounds wonderful. You want to know what we would have done after *In Through The Out Door*? Well, it would have been along those sort of lines in terms of the attitude."

Of course, Bonham's death on September 25, 1980, means that Led Zeppelin would never return to the studio as a band again. But *Coda* is now finally a fitting tribute to their fallen bandmate and, indeed, the band's entire career.

"It's been a long process," says Page, reflecting on the campaign and the restoration of Zep's legacy. "But it had to be done so that people could really hear what we were about, and in the right way. It's been fantastic to do it."

CODA
LED·ZEPPELIN

AND THE REST...

2. G STANDS FOR GO-BETWEENS *Vol 1* (Domino)

3. HARMONIA
Complete Works (Groenland)

4. JACKSON C FRANK
The Complete Recordings (Ba Da Bing!)

5. THE STRANDS
The Magical World Of... (Megaphone)

6. THE ROLLING STONES
Sticky Fingers (Universal)

7. ROBIN GIBB
Saved By The Bell (Rhino)

8. LINK WRAY
3-Track Shack (Ace)

9. THE PRETTY THINGS
Bouquets From A Cloudy Sky (Snapper)

10. BOB DYLAN
The Cutting Edge 1965-1966 (Sony)

Alamy, Gabriel Baharia

38

LONELADY

HINTERLAND

Warp

Five years after tense debut *Nerve Up!*, Julie Ann Campbell's second album proper was inspired by hermetic rambling in the post-industrial concrete zones of Manchester. The resulting psychological insights, communicated via lithe, funk-enriched dance pop, made for an enthralling, near-mystic excursion from normal reality. *IH*

Start with: Into The Cave

37

PROMISED LAND SOUND

FOR USE AND DELIGHT

Paradise Of Bachelors

On constant rotation in the MOJO offices was this second album from a young Nashville five-piece who appear to have studied every great country-rock LP of the 1970s and added their special mix of eerily hypnotic riffs, cryptic lyrics, and hazy, plaintive harmonies. *AM*

Start with: Through The Seasons

36

FATHER JOHN MISTY

I LOVE YOU, HONEYBEAR

Bella Union/Sub Pop

He loves to love, he loves to loathe. And self-examination plays a part in this bewildering, beguiling discourse from Josh Tillman's dissolute alter ego, filled with melodies that emerge from nowhere, beachware harmonies and lyrics that both shock and provide laughter – "malaprops" indeed! *FD*

Start with: Bored In The USA

THE LIBERTINES

35

THE LIBERTINES

ANTHEMS FOR DOOMED YOUTH

Virgin EMI

Ragged, inconsistent, divisive – well, yes. It's The Libertines. Neither rehab nor One Direction's producer got the grime out, but Pete 'n' Carl's shuffling skiffle, meandering skank and West End-flavoured sing-alongs were shot through with romance, reflection and an unadorned poetic *joie de vivre*. *BM*

Start with: Fame & Fortune

JASON ISBELL

34

JASON ISBELL

SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE

Southeastern

Incredibly, the Americana golden boy's second album since getting sober beat big-hat superstar Alan Jackson to the US Country Number 1 spot. Even more impressively, Isbell did it by avoiding country's clichés, refusing to see blue-collar dread, disaster and resolution as neatly packaged emotions. *AF*

Start with: If It Takes A Lifetime

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS

33

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS

CHASING YESTERDAY

Sour Mash

The title says it all. Gallagher remains the finest pillager of rock's fading tapestries, but the elder statesman now borrows equally from his own former band as well as old-timers as diverse as David Essex and Led Zep, while exploring some fresher sonic territories. Archetypal pop-rock grandeur. *BH*

Start with: Lock All The Doors

32

JAMIE XX

IN COLOUR

Young Turks

The poster boy for bedroom muso-nerks ventured outside this summer, in a metaphorical Aztec-print hoodie, for this sentimental rave-up, featuring xx bandmates Romy and Oliver, plus Young Thug and Popcaan on guest vocals, lots of babbling MCs and palms-aloft swooning. *JB*

Start with: I Know There's Gonna Be (Good Times)

EZRA FURMAN

31

EZRA FURMAN

PERPETUAL MOTION PEOPLE

Bella Union

Encompassing poles as extreme as The Waterboys (on Hour Of Deepest Need's heartsore howl) and doo wop (Pot Holes' playful '50s piano chord progression) Furman's third LP confirmed his place in a venerated line of ingenious rock poets that includes Jonathan Richman and Lou Reed. *JB*

Start with: Restless Year

30

BILL FAY

WHO IS THE SENDER?

Dead Oceans

Recorded in comparative haste after the 40-year wait between his two previous studio LPs, in sound and effect Fay's fourth was a tempered, valedictory affair, the north London singer's delicate philosophies and fragile voice buoyed on sweeping melodies and warm, restful arrangements. *AM*

Start with: The Freedom To Read

I DON'T LIKE SHIT
I DON'T GO OUTSIDE
AN ALBUM BY EARL SWEATSHIRT

29

EARL SWEATSHIRT

I DON'T LIKE SHIT, I DON'T GO OUTSIDE

Columbia

"I spent the day drinking and missing my grandmother," asserted art-brat Odd Future alumnus Thebe Neruda Kgositsile at the start of this 10-track, 30-minute, second album proper: the most pithily – and perversely – uplifting celebration of agoraphobia that rap's age of solipsism has so far produced. *BT*

Start with: Huey

MATTHEW E WHITE

28

MATTHEW E WHITE

FRESH BLOOD

Domino

Virginia's Matthew E White draws on soul and gospel for inspiration to deal with love (Take Care My Baby), death (Tranquility, dedicated to Philip Seymour Hoffman), and rock's loss of potency (Rock'n'Roll Is Cold), all with the lightest touch. *PA*

Start with: Rock'n'Roll Is Cold

Ester Rada, taking on the world.

2015

URBAN

Compiled by ANDY COWAN

1. **KENDRICK LAMAR** *To Pimp A Butterfly* (Polydor)
2. **MBONGWANA STAR** *From Kinshasa* (World Circuit)
3. **YOUNG FATHERS** *White Men Are Black Men Too* (Big Dada)
4. **DR .YEN LO** *Days With Dr. Yen Lo* (Pavlov Institute)
5. **ROOTS MANUVA** *Bleeds* (Big Dada)
6. **DR. DRE** *Compton* (Polydor)
7. **CONSTANT DEVIANTS** *Avant Garde* (Six2Six)
8. **STIG OF THE DUMP** *Kubrick* (Lewis Recordings)
9. **BADBADNOTGOOD & GHOSTFACE KILLAH** *Sour Soul* (LEX)
10. **KWABS** *Love + War* (Atlantic)

WORLD

Compiled by DAVID HUTCHEON

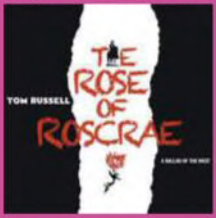
SONGHOY BLUES
MUSIC IN EXILE

1. **SONGHOY BLUES** *Music In Exile* (Transgressive)
2. **MBONGWANA STAR** *From Kinshasa* (World Circuit)
3. **IBEYI** *Ibeyi* (XL)
4. **BASSEKOU KOUYATÉ & NGONI BA** *Ba Power* (Glitterbeat)
5. **ESTER RADA** *Ester Rada* (Discograph)
6. **CRIOLO** *Convoque Seu Buda* (Sterns Music)
7. **AFRICA EXPRESS PRESENTS** *Terry Riley's In C Mali* (The Orchard)
8. **OMAR SOULEYMAN** *Bahdeni Nami* (Monkeytown)
9. **DENGUE FEVER** *The Deepest Lake* (Tuk Tuk)
10. **KANDIA KOUYATÉ** *Renascence* (Sterns Africa)

2015

FOLK

Compiled by COLIN IRWIN



1. **TOM RUSSELL** *The Rose Of Roscrae* (Frontera)
2. **VARIOUS** *Joy Of Living* (Cooking Vinyl)
3. **QRISTINA & QUINN BACHAND** *Little Hinges* (Factor)
4. **LAU** *The Bell Never Rang* (Reveal)
5. **STICK IN THE WHEEL** *From Here* (Stick In The Wheel)
6. **KERR, CUTTING & SIMPSON** *Murmurs* (Topic)
7. **THE YOUNG 'UNS** *Another Man's Ground* (Hereteu)
8. **RHIANNON GIDDENS** *Tomorrow Is My Turn* (Nonesuch)
9. **TOM & BEN PALEY** *Paley & Son* (Hornbeam)
10. **ELIZA CARTHY & TIM ERIKSEN** *Bottle* (Navigator)

ELECTRONICA

Compiled by STEPHEN WORTHY

FLOATING POINTS
ELAENIA

1. **FLOATING POINTS** *Elaenia* (Pluto)
2. **JAMIE XX** *In Colour* (XL)
3. **ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER** *Garden of Delete* (Warp)
4. **LHF** *For The Thrown* (Keysound Recordings)
5. **UFFE** *Radio Days* (Tartelet)
6. **HERBERT** *The Shakes* (Accidental)
7. **FP-ONER** *5* (Mule Musiq)
8. **SEVEN DAVIS JR** *Universes* (Ninja Tune)
9. **PORTICO** *Living Fields* (Ninja Tune)
10. **THE ORB** *Moonbuilding 2703 AD* (Kompakt)

Jamie xx: colour him in.

LEON BRIDGES
COMING HOME
27

LEON BRIDGES

COMING HOME

Columbia

Such is Leon Bridges' timeless qualities he's simply dubbed 'The Truth' in his home state of Texas. Yet with much personality and idiosyncrasy – the album was recorded on an indoor golf course, after all – far from a museum piece his debut proves a vibrant expression of 21st century soul. *PS*

Start with: Smooth Sailin'

Wilco
Star Wars
26

WILCO

STAR WARS

dBpm

Reflecting the sudden manner of its internet release, Wilco's ninth album felt both free and full of surprise, balanced beautifully between their knowing classicism and experimental roaming. High in anxiety but full of joy, it showed a band brilliantly activating their songwriting force. *VS*

Start with: Random Name Generator

SATURNS PATTERN
25

PAUL WELLER

SATURNS PATTERN

Parlophone

Macca, Erik Satie and Santana are rolled up in a big Rizla and ignited with impromptu glee on this exploratory remedy to 2012's flashy *Sonik Kicks*. More than ever, Mod's erstwhile law-giver seems intent on ripping up the rule book. *DE*

Start with: Pick It Up

MATADOR GAZ COOMBES
24

GAZ COOMBES

MATADOR

Hot Fruit Recordings

Twenty years on from feeling Alright, Gaz Coombes makes the most out of life's complexities in spectacular fashion. Balancing a minimalist atmosphere with the Supergrass man's tuneful-instincts, from brooding beginnings *Matador* delicately unfolds into a rousing crescendo of thoughtful, perfect pop. *PS*

Start with: 20_20

JOHN GRANT

GREY TICKLES, BLACK PRESSURE

Bella Union

Building on the electronic id-scapes of *Pale Green Ghosts*, Grant's third was a concept suite about love that gave us confession, comedy and songs of gleeful hate. Command of ballads, new wave and club tracks – with nods to Hitler, Hieronymus Bosch and Angie Dickinson – added to the self-lacerating fun. *IH*

Start with: Grey Tickles, Black Pressure

WHITE MEN
ARE
BLACK MEN
TOO
22

YOUNG FATHERS

WHITE MEN ARE BLACK MEN

Too Big Dada

Second extraordinary album in a row from the Scots-based trio, now edging further into avant-R&B territory. Delicate melodies emerge from sonic scree as racial legacies play out in a miasma of doubt, sadness and threat. Finally, an heir to Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*. *DE*

Start with: Old Rock n Roll

RICHARD THOMPSON STILL
21

RICHARD THOMPSON

STILL

Proper

Consistently satisfying, *Still* bristles with terrific character sketches invigorated by tremendous guitar solos from opener She Never Could Resist A Winding Road, All Buttoned Up (frustrated youth's grumble about virgin girlfriend tells as much about him as her), to Guitar Heroes' virtuosic tributes. *GB*

Start with: All Buttoned Up

DUNGEN

ALLAS SAK

Smalltown Supersound

The seventh album by Swedish psychedelic adventurers continues their journey deep into a sound world where '70s psych collides with genuine songcraft. From bongo-driven freak-outs (Sista Festen) to melodic Soft Machine-styled vibes (Akt Dit), *Allas Sak*'s warmth envelops you. Fittingly, its title translates as "everyone's thing". *PA*

Start with: Akt Dit

JOANNA NEWSOM
DIVERS
19

JOANNA NEWSOM

DIVERS

Drag City

More concentrated than 2006's *Ys* and with more of a chamber ensemble feel than 2010's *Have One On Me*, *Divers* finds the questing Californian playing keyboards and harp, while singing some of her most adventurously structured and lyrically dense, yet gorgeously melodic music to date. *MB*

Start with: Leaving The City

BLUR

THE MAGIC WHIP

Parlophone

Graham Coxon more than made up for skipping out on *Think Thank* by rescuing these sessions from a studio bin in Hong Kong. However, melding Blur's explorative spirit with a neo-Britpop pomp, *The Magic Whip* is no mere salvage job, but an above average addition to the Blur canon. *PS*

Start with: Thought I Was A Spaceman

HOOTON TENNIS CLUB

HIGHEST POINT IN CLIFF TOWN

Heavenly

Produced by Bill Ryder-Jones, laudably slapdash Chester buckos played sanguine slacker indie, with hints of Pavement and Teenage Fanclub, which centred on hometown surrealism and socialising. Hints that they suspect the carefree summer might not last forever added edge. *IH*

Start with: Jasper

D'ANGELO
AND THE
VANGUARD
BLACK
MESSIAH
16

D'ANGELO

BLACK MESSIAH

RCA

On only his third studio album in 20 years, the troubled neo-soul love man gets in touch with the times in the US, pouring out politically-charged songs like 1,000 Deaths while also reconnecting with his older fan-pleasing style (Really Love). *GB*

Start with: 1,000 Deaths

Off the Hook: New Order, Mk3 (from left) Tom Chapman, Gillian Gilbert, Bernard Sumner, Stephen Morris, Phil Cunningham.

Nick Wilson

BAND OF THE YEAR

NEW ORDER

RESTATEMENT, REBIRTH, TRANSFORMATION. WHAT EVER YOU CALL *MUSIC COMPLETE* IT WAS THE MOST GLORIOUS SUCCESS STORY FOR THE VETERANS, AFTER A DIFFICULT FEW YEARS. THE BAND'S OTHER TWO, STEPHEN MORRIS AND A RETURNED GILLIAN GILBERT SPEAK TO IAN HARRISON ABOUT SIGNING TO MUTE, AND TAKING NOTHING FOR GRANTED.

New Order are MOJO's band of the year!

SM: Thank you! It's very exciting and fun, and unusual – my money wasn't on that. Just shows you. I shouldn't do bets should I?

GG: I'm surprised yeah, genuinely. You shouldn't blow your own trumpet, really, should you? Pride comes before a fall and all that!

Music Complete is a remarkable restatement of all that made New Order great.

SM: The last time it was this exciting to put a record out was probably mid to late '80s, probably about *Low-Life*. It's weird, this record really did come out of gigging, and seeing the reaction to the synthy, dancey numbers.

GG: I don't think we took anything for granted with this one. It was like, oh my God, when we played live again [in 2011], we didn't want to put too much into it because it could all have fallen flat on its face. And when it didn't, we just moved on to the next step, and wrote a couple of songs. We had a lot of good luck as well with Elly Jackson and Tom Rowlands. It created a bit of enthusiasm that I suppose we'd lost. It's like being on tour and seeing younger people come, it gives you a boost.

Did signing to the Mute label make a big difference?

SM: When it first came up we thought, "Why didn't we think of it before?" It's so bloody obvious.

GG: Mute were very involved with the writing process, which was weird but good. [Label boss] Daniel Miller, he's so musical and he does everything, so it was nice to have someone like that to give advice. We all respected him.

SM: He did something that, again, had been missing for a while, and gave an opinion in a way that wasn't just an A&R thing. Yeah, Daniel was great, and not just for the quite insane Cold War secrecy of his passwords!

> "THE LAST TIME IT WAS THIS EXCITING TO PUT A RECORD OUT WAS PROBABLY *LOW-LIFE*."
>
> Stephen Morris

Was it easier making it without a certain bassist?

GG: I must admit, yes. I feel like everybody's on an equal footing, I don't know why. I think with the Hooky thing, as you go on you build up your own little, not resentments, but we'd been together for so long. It was a lot more pleasant for me.

SM: Straight away it was different. When you take something out of the equation and put something else in, you've got to do it differently whether you want to or not.

Did you feel like you were fighting for this record to be worthy of the New Order name?

SM: I can't deny that, yeah. Even though you didn't feel like you had something to prove, you felt like you ought to try harder to make a great record. Not that you go out of your way to make a shit record… and this one was more interesting than most because you're doing something new, and when it's novel and fun you come up with something better than when it turns into a drudge.

It does feel like a new beginning, then?

SM: It kind of is like starting again, but then a bit of me thinks, "You're a bit too old to be starting again." Did we just strike lucky? And, shouldn't you stop when you're on top? I don't think there'd be much point in doing another one the same as this one, though.

GG: I think we are a new entity in a way, the past is gone a bit. We decided to call it *Music Complete* because that's what it was, we just thought that's it, that's our music. Complete.

Paul Dano (second from left) inhabits Brian Wilson in Love & Mercy; (bottom) Brian and Melinda, "It was a nice ending."

FILM OF THE YEAR (Dir. Bill Pohlad)

LOVE & MERCY

MOJO'S FAVOURITE FILM OF 2015 WAS A ROCK BIOPIC THAT DODGED THE CLICHES TO PRESENT A MOVING AND BELIEVABLE PORTRAIT OF MUSIC-MAKING IN EXTREMIS. ANDREW MALE SPOKE TO ITS SUBJECTS, BRIAN AND MELINDA WILSON.

Love & Mercy is MOJO's Film of The Year. Congratulations!
Brian: Wow!
Melinda: I can't even believe it!

It's a deserved winner. Unlike most biopics it captured something very human and very real.
B: Yeah! Very real. I agree with you. That's right. I thought the movie was very real and very well cast. The casting for me was just brilliant. Paul Dano and John Cusack both did great jobs. They spent a lot of time with me. They wanted to know how I produced records, the way I would move my body around, things like that.

For the first time in a fictional rock biopic it felt like you were really watching music being made. Those scenes where you're recording *Pet Sounds* were incredibly emotional for that reason.
B: Yeah, well, it was captured to be real, that's why you thought it was real.
M: We insisted that everything be as real and authentic as possible because, as you know, there has been a lot of stuff out there that wasn't, and we just wanted to set the record straight.
B: Well, it took us 19 years to develop the script. Nineteen years!

It's a love story, but it's also a story of rescue.
M: Yeah. I mean, even if it wasn't Brian Wilson we were talking about, this would have been a good movie.
B: You're right.
M: Chalk it up to fate.

Melinda, what did you think of Elizabeth Banks portrayal of you and your relationship with Brian?
M: She's amazing. We're a lot alike in a lot of ways. We only had one lunch for about three hours, right before they were starting to film the movie, and it was like we were old friends, we just hit it off immediately.

"EXTRAORDINARY. VISIONARY. BRILLIANCE ON BRILLIANCE."
THE LIFE, LOVE AND GENIUS OF BRIAN WILSON
JOHN CUSACK · PAUL DANO · ELIZABETH BANKS · PAUL GIAMATTI
love&mercy

"PAUL DANO AND JOHN CUSACK BOTH DID GREAT JOBS."
Brian Wilson

The supporting characters are all spot on. Johnny Sneed, the guy who played Hal Blaine...
B: Oh, he played Hal beautifully! Yes. That was one of my favourite scenes. My favourite scene is between John Cusack and Elizabeth Banks, the scene where I meet Melinda inside the car. That's my favourite scene.
M: Everything John [Cusack] did was well thought out. Just perfect. I think my favourite scene was when Melinda and Brian are in the restaurant and he was being so honest about his life and she could tell how vulnerable he was.

The hardest scenes to watch were when Dr. Eugene Landy was abusing Brian. How close did Paul Giamatti get to Landy's darkness.
M: So close! When Brian and I heard his voice we looked at each other and it was just like, Oh. My. God. This is crazy.
B: Paul Giamatti captured it so well, I actually believed that that was Doctor Landy himself! Imagine that!
M: The first time I saw it, it freaked me out.
B: Yeah! Me too!

The film feels very honest, about Landy's treatment of Brian but also on the subject of the voices in Brian's head.
M: Nineteen years ago, we were saying that if this film was going to be done then it had to be done in an honest way, and that included all Brian's voices, his mental illness, because we hoped this movie would help people who were going through some of the same things that Brian was forced to go through.
B: Those people who see the movie, they can identify with me because they're probably going through a little bit of rough times themselves, you know?
M: We've had a lot of letters, Facebook posts, from people with their own issues. I think if we can get to the point where people feel comfortable talking about their own mental health issues, in the way that we now talk about, say, cancer, then, as a society, we've really achieved something. It was hard to go through, but it was a nice ending.
B: And I hope that you liked the movie too, Andrew.

I loved it, Brian. I've never seen a more convincing scene in a recording studio. I truly believed *Pet Sounds* was being made in those scenes.
B: I did too! I got the same vibe that you got, on that one.
M: It was really important for Bill to film the movie in California. It was more costly but he went ahead so that we could use the real studios.
B: Thanks very much for the interview, Andrew. I hope you get a chance to see the movie again.

Rex, François Duhamel, Natalija Kent

RICHARD DAWSON
NOTHING IMPORTANT
15

RICHARD DAWSON
NOTHING IMPORTANT
Weird World/Domino

Album five from the sui generis Newcastle-upon-Tyne singer was British folk music through a warped Pound Shop mirror; a singular sonic world of epic mind-rambles, punctuated by fraying Derek Bailey-esque guitar, suggesting some mind-altering North Pennines hike, fuelled on screen-wash vodka, pasties and regret. *AM*

Start with: The Vile Stuff

SLEATER-KINNEY / NO CITIES TO LOVE
14

SLEATER-KINNEY
NO CITIES TO LOVE
Sub Pop

Comeback of the year after New Order goes to the inscrutable Portland trio whose first album in a decade is also a recognised career high, one packed with raw-nerve anthems, adroit lyrics and guitar smarts (amazing fact: Carrie Browstein referenced Duran's *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* throughout). *JB*

Start with: Bury Our Friends

LOW
ONES AND SIXES
Sub Pop

Over 21 years, Minnesota trio Low have gradually expanded their dynamic gamut from stark, brooding simplicity to this most stirring work by a singular, millennial indie phenomenon, one who sound like no-one else, except perhaps an Agnetha and Björn-fronted Velvet Underground. *JB*

Start with: What Part Of Me

courtney barnett
12

COURTNEY BARNET
SOMETIMES I SIT AND THINK, AND SOMETIMES I JUST SIT
Marathon Artists

A rock naïf-poet radiating charisma, Barnett's bittersweet vignettes and wry portrait songs have a self-deprecating slackness that belies a sharp musical talent. With long, languid Melbourne vowel sounds she casually executes remarkable lyrical feats with maximum indie appeal. *JB*

Start with: Pedestrian At Best

BOB DYLAN
SHADOWS IN THE NIGHT
11

BOB DYLAN
SHADOWS IN THE NIGHT
Columbia

For his wee small hours album *à la* Sinatra when not swinging that ring-a-ding thing, Dylan honours classic Tin Pan Alley's meticulously wrought reflections on love and time's passing, his autumnal croon owlishly sincere in a moonstruck pedal-steel and brushed drum reverie. *MS*

Start with: Why Try To Change Me Now

SUFJAN STEVENS
CAR
10
WELL

SUFJAN STEVENS
CARRIE & LOWELL
Asthmatic Kitty

The Michigan singer-songwriter's ingenu pipes evince melancholy wisdom (plus one disquieting wank confession) on his most direct album yet, with sparse guitar/banjo arrangements undressing affecting, enduring songs, many in memory of his mother – the titular Carrie – who died in 2012. *DE*

Start with: Should Have Known Better

SLEAFORD MODS
KEY MARKETS
Harbinger Sound

The gone-overground sound of minimum wage fury, the Notts grot shamen's third album proper was bleak and hostile – inevitably, cataloguing as it does the establishment kleptocracy's national fire sale - but thanks to Jason Williamson's phantasmagorical lyricism, it was still compelling. The most glaring Mercury music prize omission for years. *IH*

Start with: Face To Faces

MBONGWANA STAR
8

MBONGWANA STAR
FROM KINSHASA
World Circuit

This album's original title – From Kinshasa To The Moon – would have suited better. This music, created by ex-Staff Benda Bilili and Franco-Irish producer Doctor L, took central African modes and collided them with hip hop, techno and psychedelia: distorted and shapeshifting, its alien immediacy was exhilarating. *IH*

Start with: Suzanna

SONGHOY BLUES
MUSIC IN EXILE
7

SONGHOY BLUES
MUSIC IN EXILE
Transgressive

Mali's rising stars are used to playing marathon three-hour sets designed to make hometown Bamako audiences dance. Capturing their live energy on record proved a challenge, ably overcome with the help of producer Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. They have yielded an album whose sheer groove simply forces you to move joyously. *PA*

Start with: Soubour

BILL RYDER-JONES
WEST KIRBY COUNTY PRIMARY
Domino

Largely recorded in his old teenage bedroom, the swirl of confessionals and half-remembered daydreams of former Coral man's third solo album prove even more intimate than its bath time album sleeve! Raw yet frequently charming, the honesty within these songs is truly life affirming. *PS*

Start with: Two To Birkenhead

JIM O'ROURKE
SIMPLE SONGS
Drag City

US indie's Grand Wizard can beam down from planet art-rock more often if wonders like this result. There's a touch of Cat Stevens in O'Rourke's breathless vocals, and strains of '70s prog-pop throughout, plus judicially applied O'Rourke richness. Simple, see? *DE*

Start with: Last Year

Wig out with Lightning Bolt's *Fantasy Empire*.

2015

AMERICANA
Compiled by SYLVIE SIMMONS

JASON ISBELL
SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE

1. **JASON ISBELL** *Something More Than Free* (Southeastern)
2. **GIANT SAND** *Heartbreak Pass* (New West)
3. **RHIANNON GIDDENS** *Tomorrow Is My Turn* (Nonesuch)
4. **SUN KIL MOON** *Universal Themes* (Caldo Verde)
5. **ROBERT EARL KEEN** *Happy Prisoner* (Dualtone)
6. **DAVE ALVIN AND PHIL ALVIN** *Lost Time* (Yeproc)
7. **WILCO** *Star Wars* (dBpm)
8. **JAMES MCMURTRY** *Complicated Game* (Complicated Game)
9. **OLIVIA CHANEY** *The Longest River* (Nonesuch)
10. **JIM WHITE VS THE PACKWAY HANDLE BAND** *Take It Like A Man* (Yeproc)

UNDERGROUND
Compiled by ANDREW MALE

LIGHTNING BOLT

1. **LIGHTNING BOLT** *Fantasy Empire* (Thrill Jockey)
2. **RICHARD DAWSON** *Nothing Important* (Domino/Weird World)
3. **LAURA CANNELL** *Beneath Swooping Talons* (Front & Follow)
4. **DEAN MCPHEE** *Fatima's Hand* (Hood Faire)
5. **CHRISTINA VANTZOU** *No. 3* (Kranky)
6. **PRURIENT** *Frozen Niagara Falls* (Profound Lore)
7. **HELM** *Olympic Mess* (PAN)
8. **LEE BANNON** *Patterns Of Excel* (Ninja Tune)
9. **MOUNT EERIE** *Sauna* (P.W. Elverum & Sun)
10. **BILLY JENKINS** *Death, Ritual & Resonation* (billyjenkins.com)

2015

JAZZ

Compiled by CHRIS INGHAM

DENNIS ROLLINS' VELOCITY TRIO
SYMBIOSIS

1. DENNIS ROLLINS' VELOCITY TRIO *Symbiosis* (Dogwithabone)

2. PARTIKEL *String Theory* (Whirlwind)

3. PETE OXLEY/NICOLAS MEIER *Chasing Tales* (MGP)

4. JULIAN ARGÜELLES *Let It Be Told* (Basho)

5. THE BAD PLUS/JOSHUA REDMAN *The Bad Plus/Joshua Redman* (Nonesuch)

6. PHIL ROBSON *The Cut Off Point* (Whirlwind)

7. INDIGO KID II *Fist Full Of Notes* (Babel)

8. JOHN SCOFIELD *Past Present* (Impulse)

9. FRED HERSCH *Solo* (Palmetto)

10. STEVE FISHWICK/OSIAN ROBERTS/FRANK BASILE SEXTET *In The Empire State* (Hard Bop)

REGGAE REISSUES

Compiled by ANDREW PERRY

BUNNY 'STRIKER' LEE & FRIENDS
NEXT CUT!
JOHNNY CLARKE
BARRINGTON SPENCE
LINVAL THOMPSON
TOMMY McCOOK
PRINCE JAMMY
WAYNE JARRETT
VIN GORDON
CORNELL CAMPBELL
BARRY BIGGS

1. BUNNY 'STRIKER' LEE & FRIENDS *Next Cut!* (Pressure Sounds)

2. SINGERS & PLAYERS *War Of Words* (On-U Sound)

3. LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY *Mr Perry I Presume* (Pressure Sounds)

4. THE ABYSSINIANS *Arise* (UMC)

5. VARIOUS *Rastafari: The Dreads Enter Babylon 1955-83* (Soul Jazz)

6. VARIOUS *Frontline Presents: Reggae Discomixes* (UMC)

7. BURNING SPEAR *Social Living* (island/Caroline)

8. PABLO MOSES *Revolutionary Dream* (Only Roots)

9. YABBY YOU *Dread Prophesy: The Strange And Wonderful Story Of...* (Shanachie)

10. LINVAL THOMPSON *Strong Like Sampson* (Hot Milk)

TREND OF THE YEAR

WEIRD R&B GOES OVERGROUND

THE SUCCESS OF THE WEEKND SAW A NEW WEIRD KIND OF UNDERGROUND R&B ENTER THE CHARTS. PAUL LESTER CHARTS ITS STRANGE, SLOW, FOUR-YEAR RISE.

THE WEEKND's Can't Feel My Face was, in many ways, an odd record to become a UK Top 3 hit, a US Number 1 and the most played track on Spotify all summer. The popping bassline and propulsive rhythm were inviting, and there was no denying the keening melody. But there was a ghostly shimmer to the production gloss and an anxious charge to the falsetto, a desperate peal, that made it all seem strange, alien.

More dislocating still were the lyrics: "And I know she'll be the death of me, at least we'll both be numb," sang Abel Tesfaye, who is The Weeknd, sounding for all the world – and much of the world was listening, including Tom Cruise, who lip-synched the song on The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon – like a Michael Jackson reborn and ready to divulge every nasty, nervous, paranoid thought he'd ever had.

Few could have predicted, when he emerged with his trilogy of mixtapes in 2011, that the Toronto singer would, within four years, according to the lyric- (and stat-) dissecting website Genius, become the 10th most successful US artist this decade, just nudging out Eminem from a lineup that includes Adele, Taylor Swift and Rihanna.

In the four years since the release of 2011's *House Of Balloons* Tesfaye has bent R&B to his will. "Mixtape" did this conceptual near-masterpiece of narcotised electronica a disservice. Although there had been glimmers, with Kanye West's 2008 album *808s And Heartbreak* and Drake's *Thank Me Later* (2010), of a dolorous, dirge-like direction for urban music, *Balloons* was the harbinger of a new kind of R&B; murky, enervated, for nighthawks deadened by bacchanalian excess. Although he only dropped the "e" in his name because there was already a band called The Weekend, it made sense: this was music made by and for "the weakened" – it sounded etiolated, enfeebled, heavy with moral lassitude.

Long before the idea of the new-mysterious-artist became an internet cliché, Tesfaye maintained his anonymity, rising from the depths of blog-land, bypassing the major labels with a DIY attitude and an anything-goes credo: the scenes of seduction and depravity portrayed on *HOB* and follow-ups *Thursday* and *Echoes Of Silence* induced literally guilty pleasure – you felt uncomfortable eavesdropping on The Weeknd's druggy, sexually ravenous demimonde while being awed by the soundtrack's terrible beauty.

Featuring samples of Siouxsie And The Banshees, Cocteau Twins and Beach House, this was R&B hedonism with a fitting gothic undertow. There was clearly something in the air. On his own 2011 mixtape, *Nostalgia, Ultra*, Frank Ocean of hip hop collective Odd Future crooned mournfully about suicide and porn-star sex sessions numbed by cocaine, 'Novacane' and Viagra while sampling Radiohead, Coldplay, MGMT and Eagles. The relationship between black and white music became increasingly porous. There was the billowing, ethereal "cloud rap" of producer Clams Casino and affiliated artists such as A$AP Rocky, whose 2011 single Peso set new standards for stoned radiance. The Tri Angle label became the home of spectral, foggy, crepuscular R&B with its intimations of sadness and pain, made by laptop kids in thrall to black R&B present and past – New Yorker Tom Krell aka How To Dress Well cited '90s swingbeat as an influence and dreamed of collaborating with pop-R&B majordomo The-Dream and Kanye. Beyoncé's sister Solange covered Dirty Projectors' gorgeous Stillness Is The Move while Tri Angle boss Robin Carolan spoke about missing-in-action noughties R&B singer Cassie in the sort of reverential tones others might mention Syd Barrett.

"THERE IS LITTLE ATTEMPT TO DOWNPLAY THE DARKER ASPECTS OF THE WEEKND PERSONA."

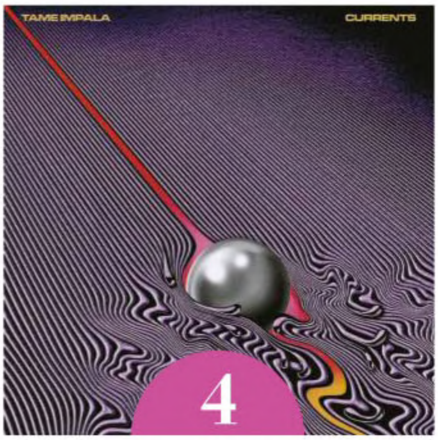
2013-14 saw an influx of experimental females such as Kelela, Jessy Lanza, SZA, Jhené Aiko and Banks, all keen to maintain this dialogue between the margins and the mainstream. And London's FKA Twigs showed how borderless this new dream(y) version of R&B was. Her debut album, *LP1*, reached Number 16 in the UK and went Top 30 in the US, but for all the plaudits afforded Twigs and Frank Ocean – whose 2012 album *Channel Orange* peaked at 136 in the UK and 137 in the States – it has been The Weeknd who has converted indie acclaim into widespread acceptance. And he's done it without diluting his often grim, nihilistic confessions. For all the co-writes with super-producer Max Martin on his latest album, *Beauty Behind The Madness*, and increasingly lavish production, there is little attempt to downplay the darker aspects of the Weeknd persona.

But that's what most excites about Tesfaye and his new soul vision: its thrilling amorality, the sense of someone daring to reveal the dreader regions of the human condition, riding around in his new Benz and living the high life he could only fabulate on those early mixtapes. If Michael Jackson's breakthrough album was a joyous affair, then *Beauty Behind The Madness* is its opposite, a kind of inverse *Off The Wall* – the beautiful, dark, twisted fantasy writ large. It has sold millions of copies. The Weeknd's *Thriller* should be very interesting indeed.

THE WEEKND
CAN'T FEEL MY FACE

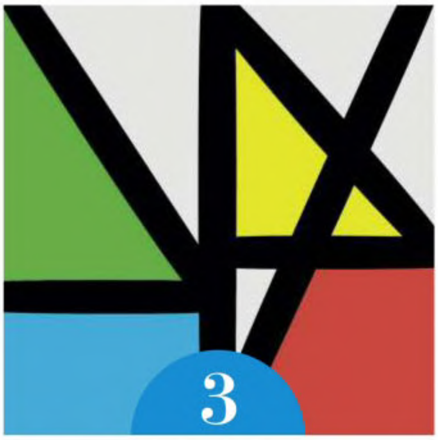
Starts here: (opposite) The Weeknd takes R&B's great leap forward; (above) Frank Ocean and FKA Twigs.

Getty Images, Dominic Sheldon



TAME IMPALA
CURRENTS
Fiction

Perth's psych-rock wunderkind Kevin Parker had already leavened his guitar FX with keyboard subtleties on 2012's *Innerspeaker*. Here, he deployed much the same gear for a sumptuously synthesized future-soul, charting mid-twentysomething shifts in his attitudes towards life, love and selfhood. *AP*
Start with: Let It Happen



NEW ORDER
MUSIC COMPLETE
Mute

Losing Ian Curtis gave birth to New Order; losing Peter Hook, in far less traumatic circumstances, led to an unexpected rebirth. The rejuvenated band struck a sublime balance of graceful contemplation and dancefloor thrills. Best since '89's *Technique*. *DL*
Start with: Restless

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT
2

KENDRICK LAMAR
TO PIMP A BUTTERFLY
Polydor

Raising the hip hop game sky high with believable, organic use of limber funk, free-blowing jazz and lithe soul voicings, Lamar and a host of A-list producers give us a thought-provoking stew of words and music, anger and hope. *GB*
Start with: The Blacker The Berry

Getty Images, Tonje Thilesen

ALBUM OF THE YEAR
JULIA HOLTER

FOUR YEARS AFTER JULIA HOLTER'S FULL-LENGTH DEBUT *TRAGEDY* WAS MOJO'S UNDERGROUND LP OF THE MONTH, SHE'S MADE THE BEST ALBUM OF 2015. "I WAS TRYING TO GO FOR THIS GOLDEN SOUND," SHE TELLS JENNY BULLEY.

JULIA HOLTER
HAVE YO
DERNESS
1

JULIA HOLTER
HAVE YOU IN MY WILDERNESS
Domino

CONFIRMED FANS of Julia Holter's eclectic, sonically inventive albums *Tragedy*, *Ekstasis* and *Loud City Song* already knew she had a fondness for conventional pop forms, as well as the more elliptical, so a whole album of vocals-to-the-fore, static-free songs was always a tantalising possibility. And here it is. "Songs that dwell together" is how Holter puts it, and as a whole album *Have You In My Wilderness* is a magical set of strange pop ballads that express very sincere emotional truths about romantic longing and confusion without ever being straightforward love songs. Lyrically, things are fairly cryptic still; the subjects of her songs are often found adrift at sea, hiding in raincoats, in variable states of consciousness. Musically, there's lots going on too, in layers of melodious strings, piano, chiming percussion and Holter's glorious cut-glass voice. Enigmatic, but crucially, *Have You In My Wilderness* is an album you'll want to listen to again as soon as it's finished, whether to fathom its depths on headphones late at night or just whirl around the coffee table to – it's a triumph of a record. *JB*
Start with: Feel You

***Have You In My Wilderness* is MOJO's Album Of The Year, congratulations.**
That's so cool. I shouldn't care, but of course, I'm really happy that people are supporting it. Especially MOJO.

Why do you think people have connected with this record so much?
I realise now that it's the only record of mine that works in a musical tradition, a little bit. I don't know exactly how to explain what that tradition is, but I think just like ballad songs and I was trying to go for this golden sound.

A verse-chorus-verse sort of thing?
Yeah, I think so. But some of these songs are old. Have You In My Wilderness dates from 2010; Betsy On The Roof, Sea Calls Me Home are all older. So I had three songs but I wanted to wait until I had a batch of songs that would dwell with them. All different stories, but worked well with the sound. Songs independent of each other. Basically, like a normal record.

You studied traditional composition. Do you apply it much now?
When I was in college, they were playing it like it was a freeform… "You can write what you want these days, everything is up to the composer." But a lot of the professors were from a period where you were not allowed to do what you wanted, classical music, basically. What resonated with me much more was when I learned about John Cage and the idea of form not being a particular arch. It was difficult for me to get into that traditional mind-set and make music that made sense at all. I ended up recording on my own because I was introverted and self-conscious. At college you had to explain what you were doing and bring your music to a professor every week and show them what you were working on. That was too much for me.

Is explaining your songs in interviews like that?
Yes, because usually they're about much more than any literal interpretation of them. I'm never sure what answer I'm expected to give. Like, "Did you really get stranded on an island?" [in Lucette Stranded On The Island] Then I'm supposed to talk about how I got stranded on an island? It's weird.

You're on tour at the moment. How do the new songs work on-stage?
We have Dina Maccabee on viola and singing with me, and Corey Fogel on drums and singing – he's been with me since 2012. And Devin Hoff on bass. I don't have any samples or anything like that, we create everything live. It's hard to get all the layers on the record live. So you arrange it differently for the live shows and you appreciate the differences.

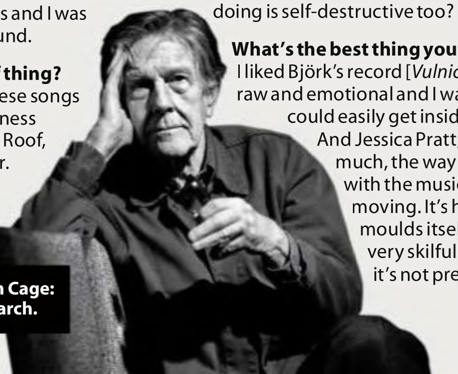
What are your live favourites?
I love Betsy On The Roof, always, and Sea Calls Me Home is really fun with this group. And Have You In My Wilderness. Those are always the funnest ones, the intense, emotional ones.

Any plans beyond touring?
I just finished a film score. It's for a boxing movie coming out next year called Bleed For This. I'm really excited about it. The director, Ben Younger, was really cool and gave me free rein. First I had to send in a mock-up of something and sent in pretty wack stuff, so I'm very lucky they took me on.

You don't seem the pugilist type.
No, exactly. And I think that's what's nice about it. It doesn't necessarily sound like my music either; it's very simple, sort of bluesy piano with strings and a saxophone. Boxing is super interesting. I remember reading Joyce Carol Oates' book about it. There's a lot psychologically going on in boxing.

All that machismo…
Totally. I think I relate to some of it. (*Laughs*) I have a respect for it. Its like performing, but it's also this crazy self-destructive thing. Maybe what I'm doing is self-destructive too? I don't know.

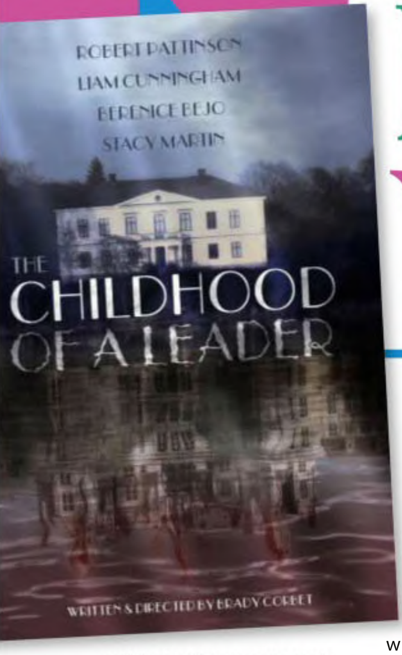
What's the best thing you've heard all year?
I liked Björk's record [*Vulnicura*] It feels really raw and emotional and I was like, feeling that. I could easily get inside that emotion. And Jessica Pratt, I love her music so much, the way she fits the words with the music is very classic and moving. It's her voice and way it moulds itself around words. It's very skilful and beautiful but it's not predictable.


John Cage: not arch.

"It works in a musical tradition, a little bit": Julia Holter answers the call of the wilderness.

"THE BEST THING I'VE HEARD ALL YEAR"

MOJO'S SELECT STABLE OF STARS PICK THE ALBUMS AND TRACKS, OLD AND NEW, THAT ROCKED AND ROLLED THEIR 2015.



STEPHEN O'MALLEY

THE SUNN O))) KING

I was able to see the film Childhood Of A Leader at the Venice Film Festival. This is a film scored by **Scott Walker**. The theme of the film is pretty challenging, dealing with the formative scenes in the life of a dictator, but the music of Scott Walker is so powerful. There's an overture in the film where it's just like brutal orchestra music, super-heavy and aggressive and powerful, over newsreel footage of war. Intense music. Scott likes to mix at full volume. He has a little doll with its head exploded at the top of the master fader channel and that's how we mix, too, where the control-room is shaking. There are a lot of metal elements in the score, but I also learned that he had over 30 brass players in there and, during the screening, I swear, man, this was at a commercial film festival but it was played *so loud*. Just. Full. On. It was really great.

MARK RONSON

UPTOWN SPECIAL AGENT

I heard some of the **Tame Impala**'s *Currents* at Glastonbury when Kevin Parker came and played with us. It was late at night, and we were all having a good time, so it didn't get me ready for the *sound*! Songs like Yes I'm Changing, New Person, Same Old Mistakes and Let It Happen. That shit fucked me up! He just went for something different, progressive and awesome. I guess that's what everyone else is trying to do, he just does it better. **Kendrick Lamar**'s *To Pimp A Butterfly* is my other tie for album of the year. It just brought back musicality to hip hop. I remember driving around LA listening to *Talking Book* by **Stevie Wonder** in the car, all those beautiful melodies intertwining and thinking: "Why don't people make records like this any more, with all these sonic textures?" and then weirdly two days later Kendrick dropped his album and that's obviously what he was on. The way all that shit weaves in and out, and the interludes are so good. I've played Alright the most while DJing this year, but the whole record is such a great fucking album. Other favourites this year are Kettles by **Hudson Mohawke**. It really stands out on the record [*Lanterns*] because the way the score works, it's like a soundtrack to a Christopher Nolan film, it's really weighty! The record I've rediscovered this year is *This Is Niecy* by **Deniece Williams**. It's just gorgeous. She had this really high, Minnie Riperton-type of range. It has that sophisticated R&B and soul and there are touches of almost Earth, Wind & Fire and Burt Bacharach in the arrangements. I'd kind of forgotten about it but found myself listening to it a lot again this year.

Mark Ronson gets ready for the songs of Tame Impala.

Deniece Williams
This Is Niecy

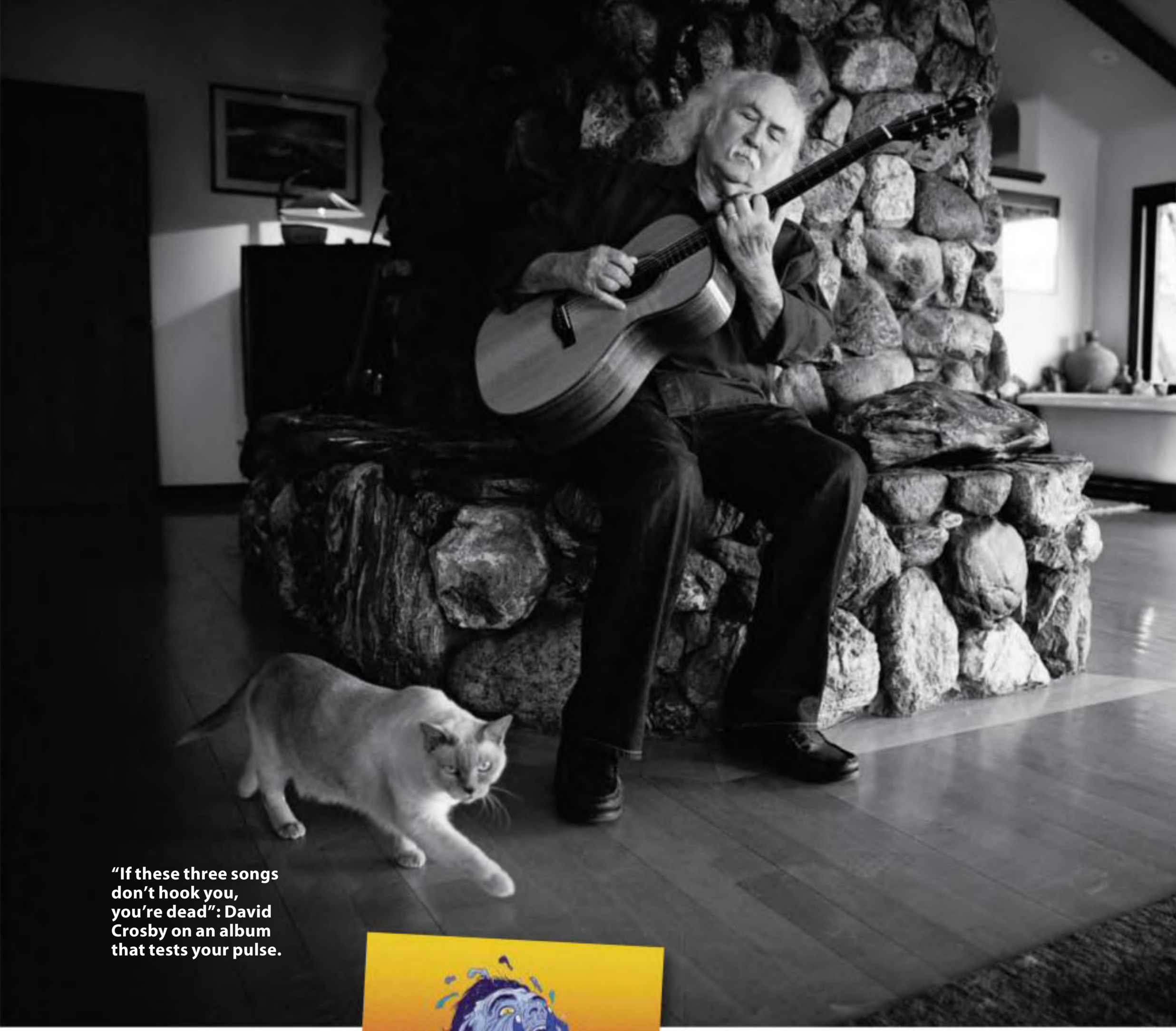
Courtney Barnett lines up for a Free Drink Ticket.

COURTNEY BARNETT

SITTIN', THINKIN'

I've always loved **Peaches**, but now I love her more because of Free Drink Ticket and because she teamed up with **Kim Gordon** for Close Up [on album *Rub*] and, well, that all just blew my tiny mind! Sometimes I have trouble getting to sleep so I listen to **Nils Frahm's** *Solo* this year too. We took **Chastity Belt** on tour so I got to slow-dance to songs from *Time To Go Home* every night. **The Drones** released a song called Taman Shud. It's fierce, it's a murder mystery,

Piper Ferguson, LeAnn Mueller, Guy Eppel, Shawn Brackbill



"If these three songs don't hook you, you're dead": David Crosby on an album that tests your pulse.

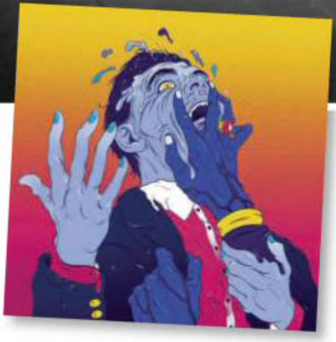
JAMES TAYLOR BEFORE THIS WORLD

DAVID CROSBY

THE CROZNUT

That's easy: **James Taylor**'s *Before This World*, the whole album. The writing, the singing, the playing, the production, everything is spectacular. He's one of the best singer-songwriters of our time – right up there with Joni and Bob. Where to start? Start with the first song, Today Today Today, then track three, Angels Of Fenway, then skip over to the other side for Far Afghanistan. If these three songs don't hook you, you're dead. You might as well call the mortuary.

plus it upset right-wing nut-bag [Australian journalist] **Andrew Bolt!** I stood in the front row at Pemberton Festival and watched **Charles Bradley** and cried. I don't know the album but I know he's amazing. Also this year I've loved the following: **Vashti Bunyan**'s 17 Pink Sugar Elephants, **Julia Holter**'s *Have You In My Wilderness*, **Sleater-Kinney**'s *No Cities To Love*, **Gold Class**'s *It's You*, **Shamir**'s *Ratchet* and **Dick Diver**'s *Melbourne, Florida*, plus **The Julie Ruin**, **Ariel Pink**, **Archie Roach**, **Total Control**, **Michael Hurley**, etc, etc!



YANNIS PHILIPPAKIS

FOALS CONTROLS

Everything Everything *Get To Heaven*. The big thing that's overlooked with them is the lyrics. There are a couple of lines on it that just seem to can all of the paranoia and anxiety of our age. Like, "Did you pack your bag or did somebody pack it for you?" Even if he lifted it straight off the check-in line, the fact that he thought to do that… it does sum up a lot of neuroses of living in the West. I just think they're a great band and it's good to have a strange band around. A lot of bands are pretty identikit, cookie cutter-like. I think the fact that they've got the bravery to wear those outfits every night on-stage… they should win an award for that in itself.

FATHER JOHN MISTY

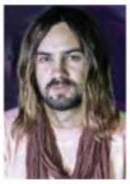
THE ARTIST ORDINARILY KNOWN AS JOSH TILLMAN

I think it was the **Jeff Bridges** album, *Sleeping Tapes*. Ultimately, the things that you like the most are the hardest to articulate but at the core of that album, for me, was a reminder that you can do anything you want and it just felt like total liberation. In some ways it's immune from any kind of critical process. It's a very generous piece of work. Actually, all of the ambient music on that record, that's my friend **Keefus Ciancia**, who's also the most prominent musician on my album apart from **Jonathan** [**Wilson**] and myself. Also, my other constant companion this year has been **Gavin Bryars**' Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet. I discovered that this year. In both those records, there's something about the dissonance, within these extended non-linear pieces, that isn't available to you within a three-minute pop song. This has also been my **Serge Gainsbourg** year. *Vu De L'Extérieur*, I've been listening to that album non-stop. Oh man, it's unbelievable and it really feels like, as much as the lyrics I can suss out, it's an album about scat, his shit-and-love album, his anti-idealism album, which I can relate to. I mean, the album cover kind of says it all: this filthy animal, this ape-man. I admire his deftness, his agility when it comes to taboos. It's not graceless. He's not rubbing it in your face.

Father John Misty digs Serge: "The album kind of cover says it all".

KEVIN PARKER

…IS TAME IMPALA



That's really difficult. The **Kendrick Lamar** album was really flooring, particularly intimidatingly good. Aside from that I've not really listened to a lot of music. Also, I'm producing and helping out this hip-hop jazz improvisational freak-out band called **Koi Child**, but I'm thinking about new songs so other kinds of music can be more of a distraction than an enjoyment. I listen to the radio more. I realised that I haven't listened to the radio in years so I'll drive around and listen to what's out there on this radio station called Triple J who are generally responsible for keeping the whole Australian alternative music scene alive. ➢

FIVE DAYS MARRIED & OTHER LAMENTS
Song and Dance From Northern Greece, 1926-1958

Elvis Costello: falling out of bed to Albanian laments.

ELVIS COSTELLO

UNFAITHFUL MUSIC MAN

I've been listening to this record called *Five Days Married & Other Laments*. It's northern Greek and southern Albanian dance music, songs to break your heart, make you laugh or fall out of bed but not necessarily in that order. This is the time-travel, mystery-story face of music just when you thought you'd heard all the great old records. It's beautifully assembled from rare 78 rpms from the late '20s and beyond by Christopher King and Susan Archie for Angry Mom Records and I'd like to thank them for blowing the dust off the needle.

KAMASI WASHINGTON

SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS

Obviously I love **Kendrick**'s *Butterfly*, but also I've been listening to **Flying Lotus**, **Thundercat**, the new **Robert Glasper** record, *Covered*, and **Christian Scott** had a really cool album, *Stretch Music*. Who else? I'd recommend **Ambrose Akinmusire**, of course, **Gregory Porter**, **Jose James**, **Miles Mosley**, but there's a lot of people who are coming up, who are real good, like **Brandon Coleman** has a new album coming out pretty soon and, **Ronald Bruner Jr**, who was on [Washington's album] *The Epic*. And it's great when you have things that open people's minds to what's out there, like **Antonio Sanchez**'s Birdman soundtrack, things that maybe people had looked at as being "not their thing" and in reality, it kinda is, they just didn't necessarily know it. Also, believe it or not, I've been revisiting things like **Doug And Jean Carne**, **Horace Tapscott**, **Gerald Wilson**, **Nate Morgan**, **Black Milk**. I'm just listening out for some kind of expression, something real. There's a big difference between just playing music and using music to express yourself. I've also been listening to **Laura Mvula**, **Corinne Bailey Rae**, **Bilal**, **Moses Sumney**, and I was really into the new **D'Angelo**. He is communicating something that is more than just the notes. Also, you should check out a guy called **Dontae Winslow**, who was on [Dr. Dre's] *Compton* record, something called *Enter The Dynasty*. His whole family, his wife and his son play on that record. That's really, really cool.

ROBERT GLASPER
Covered

Strange atmosphere, unique mood: Bobby Gillespie digs LoneLady.

Mattia Zoppellaro, Jill Furmanovsky

BOBBY GILLESPIE

SCREAM TEAM LEADER

Hinterland by **LoneLady**. It's just fucking cool. It's got a strange atmosphere and unique mood. She sings well, though I don't know what she's singing about. I think it's based on a dystopian science-fiction. **Julie Ann Campbell** is really talented – I like the way she plays guitar, it reminds me of Bernard Sumner in New Order, that early Factory Records sound, but she's made it her own. It's a great record.

NOEL GALLAGHER

CHASING YESTERDAY'S MAN

I got into that band **ESG**, three sisters from New York this year. I've seen the similarity of that and my song the Ballad Of The Mighty I in the bass line. As I'm listening to it I'm thinking, "Ah that's the next step back from the early acid house." After the disco disco it's street disco. So I've listened to [*Dance To*] *The Best Of ESG* a lot thinking, "Fucking hell I'm going to rip them off so bad!" (*laughs*) It's unbelievable. A lot of their basslines have been appropriated for early dance music and their song UFO is sampled in quite a lot of hip-hop tunes, but it was a new one on me! This is the great thing about old music, you can discover new shit all the fucking time!

BRITTANY HOWARD

MS ALABAMA SHAKES

It came out 2013 but I listened to **Laura Mvula** record [*Sing To The Moon*] about a month ago for the first time. I was reading this article with **Jill Scott** about the things that inspired her for her new record, and we were one of them and the other one was Laura, so I checked her record out. The thing I like most is her production, it sounds really great! It's so creative in the way it's all put together. My favourite song is the opening track, Like The Morning Dew. It's beautifully orchestrated. **Gregory Porter** [*Liquid Spirit*] was another of my favourite discoveries this year. My bass player, Zac [Cockrell], showed me his music when we started touring. What attracted me is his lyrics. They're really poetic and simple, they say a lot without him having to say too much. Of course, he's got a wonderful voice, I loved the arrangement and the piano playing which is really well thought out and tasteful. I've been listening to **Hiatus Kaiyote** a lot too. Their album has been out for a while but they did this session for Australian radio that they put online. Their playing is really technical and there's a lot going on. It's really interesting.

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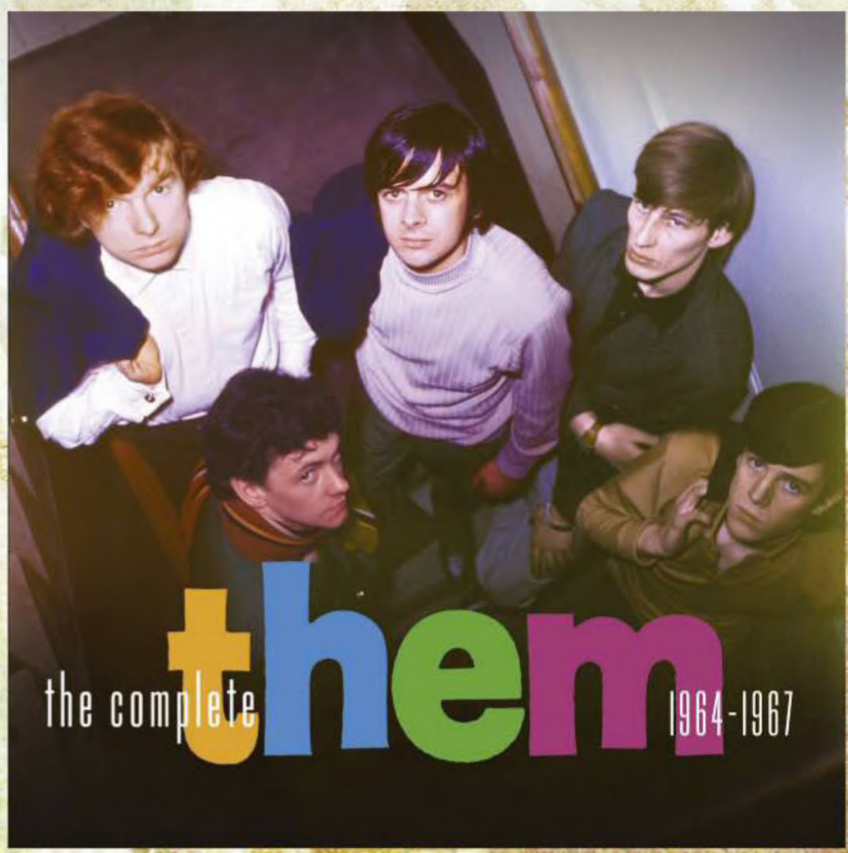

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THE DAY AFTER THE NEXT DAY

WHAT, IN THE NAME OF MAJOR TOM, IS THIS? A NEW **DAVID BOWIE** ALBUM, NOT EVEN THREE YEARS SINCE THE LAST – AND ONE OF HIS MOST STARTLING AND SATISFYING FOR YEARS. EXCLUSIVELY FOR MOJO, BOWIE "WIFE" **TONY VISCONTI** PLUMBS THE DEPTHS OF ★'S "DIFFERENT SPACE" AND THE INNER-WORKINGS OF THEIR 50 YEARS TOGETHER. "DAVID GLARED AT ME, AND I SAID 'I'M SORRY!'" HE TELLS **KEITH CAMERON**.

PORTRAITURE BY **JIMMY KING**.

PLUS! *SCARY MONSTERS*: A 35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION. THE INSIDE STORY OF THE ALBUM THAT INVENTED THE '80S, BY THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT, P.77

BY HIS OWN ESTIMATION, TONY VISCONTI'S brain doesn't start to function until around 10.30am, or "after three cups of coffee", he explains to MOJO as we arrange our interview. "11am would be perfect." When MOJO calls at the appointed time, Visconti answers a little breathlessly: "Can you give me 10 seconds?" On returning, exactly 10 seconds later, he is calmness personified. "So sorry about that. My coffee just finished brewing. What can I say?! These things are important!"

Impeccable timing and quintessential New York charm: just two of the reasons why Tony Visconti has been the man David Bowie keeps returning to, a relationship that now spans almost 50 years. When Bowie suddenly re-emerged with 2013's *The Next Day*, it felt right that this most evocative of Bowie records saw him back with Visconti, the man two years his senior who has so often been by his side and in his corner at critical junctures: a friend and mentor through the false starts of 1967-69; stoking the artistic eruption of *The Man Who Sold The World*; making sense of *Diamond Dogs*; keeping calm amid *Young Americans*; the unsung *spielmacher* of the Berlin trilogy; nervelessly helming *Scary Monsters*' art-pop explosion.

Now, three years on from his unexpected comeback, Bowie has a new album, *Blackstar* (shown as ★ on the artwork), which explores the sonic outer-limits with a group of New York's finest young jazz musicians: saxophonist Donny McCaslin, pianist Jason Lindner, bassist Tim Lefebvre, drummer Mark Guiliana and guitarist Ben Monder. Once again, his earthly representative is Tony Visconti.

"We're not married," he jokes at one point, before offering telling glimpses of how much he and David Bowie really do resemble a married couple. With Bowie currently speaking to the world only through his music or interlocutors, who better to consult about *Blackstar*'s astonishing new universe? "It is incredible how harmonious we are," Visconti says. "I go off and work with other artists and he works with other producers but somehow we find our way back together again."

You've said that David Bowie's invitation to work on *The Next Day* came out of the blue. Were you as surprised this time?

Not so much. I knew he wanted to do another one. He wanted to almost as soon as *The Next Day* was finished, but there was a lack of material, so he waited… Whenever he calls me it's always a surprise because there's no leading up to it, there's no hint, it's just "I'm ready" – that's the kind of phone call I get.

Is that what happened?

Yes. It started out with demos last year, June, and we spent a couple of days in the studio, fooled around with a few concepts and got five songs done. He also brought in demos. This is a new thing because he writes a lot at home now. They're not simple demos. The B-side of [Bowie's jazz-based 2014 single] Sue, 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore, was a home demo and it was just kick-ass. His production skills have gone up 5,000 per cent. Later last year, around December, he said, "I've got some more songs," so he'd got really busy. We didn't use all of them but it got him going. By the time he phoned me in time for the sessions which took place in January this year he had almost the whole album ready.

How did the songs sound when you began recording?

Photoshot

"A BOWIE ALBUM IS ALMOST AS COMPLICATED AS THE GALAXY WE LIVE IN."

Some had lyrics, which is unusual, he usually likes to keep that to the very end, but they were quite well formed and sophisticated. We didn't do it all in one batch. We started recording with the band in January this year and did the first four songs, and that would be a song a day.

Presumably he had a certain sound in mind when he chose those musicians?

For years he wanted to work with Maria Schneider, the composer, and she has a 17- or 19-piece band. After the sessions that led to the big band version of Sue, she said, "Check out Donny McCaslin's group. He's got an amazing group, based in New York." Donny is the solo saxophone player on Sue – it's one of the most soulful saxophone solos David and I ever heard. It always made us weep, especially the end part. He's such a passionate player. So David went to a nightclub in New York – I had the date in my calendar but I completely missed that show… anyway, David saw Donny's band and was totally convinced that he wanted to work with them.

Which club? I've seen footage of them playing at the 55 Bar, on Christopher Street.

It might have been that, I think it's in the Village. (*Laughs*) I had this thing with my iPhone, it wasn't working right and I totally missed the date. But David saw them, it was more or less that group. I think the bass player is different. Tim Lefebvre lives in LA. He's a part-time member. When he's in town he does play bass for Donny and he was our preferred bass player for the record. Boy, he's a magical bass player. We've had Tony Levin, we've had Tony Visconti on bass…

Yes, he's not bad.

(*Laughs*) But Tim knocks us all away!

Your own original grounding was in jazz – what's your take on how these guys play?

I caught the tail-end of bebop, so I was learning Charlie Parker songs and Dizzy Gillespie songs and I moved on to what was modern jazz at that time, gigging around New York until I discovered The Beatles and that's where my interest in jazz came to an end. But the jazz that I encountered with Donny is new. This is truly modern jazz. They don't play bebop, there's nothing traditional about them. Once during these sessions I suggested they play traditional, just for an eight bar break, and the energy just went so low, even just mentioning it. Even David glared at me, and I said "I'm sorry! It was just an idea…" They're into something so amazing that it's really outside the boundaries – the former boundaries – of jazz. The drummer [Mark Guiliana] is so totally into hip-hop music, and what you hear on this new album you'd swear they were loops but he's playing live! Impeccable time-keeping and beautiful technique.

What does Bowie get from you that he doesn't get from anybody else?

I ask myself the same question. After *The Next Day*, I sent him a letter of thanks and I said, "You could work with anybody and I don't know why you're working with me but thank you anyway, I really enjoyed the ride." I haven't done every one of his albums, obviously, and sometimes I think I'm going to do the next album – like *Let's Dance* – and suddenly I'm not!

That was a crushing letdown…

I know. But it was not the first time. I mean, we're not married. The music business is the only place you can change partners without cheating, y'know (*laughs*). So he's welcome to change producers. [*Let's Dance*] came as a shock and it was the first time I felt bad about it. But I don't any more, honestly. We have very similar, almost identical taste in music and vocabulary. From the first time I worked with him we just understood each other. And maybe he appreciates that. ➢

Cosmic couple: "We're a good team, David and I"; (opposite) Tony Visconti conducts at a 2012 Shepherd's Bush Empire concert to mark the 35th anniversary of Marc Bolan's death, .

"None of us were in our comfort zone": Bowie makes adjustments; (left) John Hurt and Samantha Morton in Last Panthers; the old-timey sleeve for the single Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime) (below) David with Sue collaborator Maria Schneider.

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≺ The other thing is that though I love him dearly, I don't go crazy in his presence like I've seen some younger people do, because he's David Bowie. I don't take him for granted but he's one of my oldest friends now, so maybe he appreciates that aspect of our relationship too. It puts him at ease.

For *The Next Day* you and Bowie took specific musical references from previous records you'd made together. Did you set any sonic parameters for *Blackstar*?

No, absolutely not. This is fresh. This came from a different space. I don't know how much we were doing that consciously or unconsciously for *The Next Day*, but definitely we did reference older things when we weren't sure… *The Next Day* started out trying to do something new but something old kept creeping in. Not this album. David on purpose used Donny so that wouldn't happen. If we'd used David's former musicians they would be rock people playing jazz. And some of them could definitely do that, like [guitarists] Dave Torn and Gerry Leonard, they're no slacks, they could play anything, but you'd get a different version of these songs. Having jazz guys play rock music turns it upside down. Their approach to the music was so refreshing, I looked forward to every day in the studio. Nothing was done recalling the past. There was one part where we were overdubbing just for the guitar tone. I forget what song, maybe Lazarus. I had to inform [guitarist] Ben Monder how Mick Ronson would have done it and he looked at me blankly. I think he'd heard of Mick Ronson but he'd never studied him. It was interesting, teaching a jazz guy how to play rock! And Ben is very jazz. Extremely jazz. Very dark jazz.

There are occasional hints of previous Bowie work. The saxophone or harmonica on I Can't Give Everything Away suggests A New Career In A New Town from *Low*.

Yeah, that is a harmonica. I think that actually came from off his demo. So that's him playing, so yeah, maybe you're right. Another thing that to me sounds like classic Bowie is Girl Loves Me. That's not too far-fetched. That's David Bowie doing his Cockney accent, his Anthony Newley or whoever it is.

The lyrics on that sound like droog talk from A Clockwork Orange.

Yeah, I think it's a combination of that and what is it, volare?

Polari.

Polari, sorry. I am American but I know a lot about the UK, but not everything!

In terms of organising the energy in the room, how much direction comes from David?

I've never seen Bowie running round the studio with a clipboard telling people what to do. I've never seen that in my life. We like to work ➢

"DAVID'S ALWAYS THINKING OUTSIDE OF THE BOX. LIKE, LET'S JUST BUST IT ALL UP, START AGAIN."

Sky Atlantic

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THEATRE
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LAZARUS

Bowie as Thomas James Newton in The Man Who Fell To Earth, '76; the character is back in stage musical Lazarus (poster, left).

with great musicians and we respect what's in their head. So there was a lot of improvisation that we either approved or didn't approve. The way David and I work, making an album is always an editing process; you record a little too much. A lot of other people do that as well. Especially nowadays with Pro-Tools, they might have around 400 tracks; of solos, different musicians, different guitars. We don't take it that far because David and I are good at giving feedback, which is a lost art. Young producers will just sit there and have you play for 15 hours and they won't tell you a thing. They'll just say, "OK, could you do us another one?" We never did that because we're brought up on 16-track and 8-track where you can't waste any time or keep these takes. We're good at guiding people in the right direction. We're a good team, David and I. We bounce off each other and we both inform the musicians.

By now, you must be at a stage where you rely on each other's instincts.

Yeah. And our instincts usually coincide. When they clash, that's very interesting. I usually defer to him but he always allows me to try it my way. Sometimes he'll say, "Yup, that sounds good," but usually he'll win.

Was this album quicker than the last one?

It's hard to say because we recorded monthly. We did about 10 days to two weeks per month. We recorded in January, February and March for the rhythm section at the Magic Shop and from April onwards we moved to a smaller studio called Human, part of a complex that my son Morgan Visconti owns, for post-production. That's where David did practically all of his vocals. That took about two more months of post-production work. So I'd say by June the album was finished.

Does he go into his lyrics with you if you ask?

No, we purposely avoid that. In rare instances he'll tell me what a song's about but that's happened so little in all the years that I've worked with him. I guess he feels that the music will convey the message. Sometimes I honestly don't know what he's doing. We'll listen to records, we'll discuss what we like and what we'd like to try out. I hate to use this expression but he's always thinking outside of the box. Like, let's just bust it all up, start again and construct something from the ground upwards. That's where we excel, he and I. He still does not follow trends.

Obvious question: do you know if there'll be any live shows?

What he said years ago still applies. He doesn't tell me what his plans are but he's so adamant about it when that subject comes up, he's just not going to do it. Possibly he might do a one-off but I have no knowledge of that. He'll surprise you and me at the same time if that's the case.

Can you envisage another record in the near future?

I don't know, because he did the show Lazarus without me, he's doing it with a musical director whom I recommended, so I don't know how much time Lazarus is going to take. One thing about musicals is that on opening night and closing night the show will be two different things, the director or a composer or writer will be tweaking it every night. He might take a well-deserved rest afterwards. I can't see him stopping writing; I think he's really on a roll now.

As well as producing, you and Bowie mixed *Blackstar*. But Tom Elmhirst is credited with the "final master mix"… What happened there?

David and I were mixing in my studio, and David says, "Let's do this at Electric Lady. When I worked with Arcade Fire a couple of years ago, I loved that room." But Electric Lady gave us a smaller analog room; the room he wanted wasn't for hire because Tom Elmhirst leases it. He's mixing Adele, Frank Ocean… although he's British, he's the Number 1 mixing engineer in the US. So we weren't getting anywhere in our little studio. We went to see Tom and he started playing some of his recent mixes. David took me aside: "Do you mind if I ask Tom to mix the album?" I said, "You go ahead."

Tom started mixing and his basic sound was brilliant but he was missing a few cues. I personally don't like to mix "unattended" – this is a new term in the business. Tom always works unattended – Adele never comes to the studio. But we live in New York so we attended. David and I would show up about 5pm and correct a few things. Initially Tom said, "I do a mix a day, that's how I work." David and I looked at each other and said, "I'm sorry but it takes a little longer to mix a David Bowie song…"

Still, he made it in the end.

Tom did a fantastic job, really worked hard. But the things he gets… Music is so simple these days, pop music is so simple, that it's a no-brainer. I'm sorry, but it doesn't take a lot of brains to mix an Adele record. A Bowie album is almost as complicated as the galaxy we live in. It was the first time ever that David and I worked with another mixer on something that we produced. If Tom did a terrible job then I certainly would have fought to be back on the board, but he was doing exquisite work. Do you like the sound of the album?

It's dazzling.

It is pretty cool. It's got a dazzling low end and all the dreamscapes are there too. It's got a very wide vista. David's voice sounds fabulous. I'm very proud of it. None of us were in our comfort zone, that's what's so good about the album. This album could have taken two years to make, like *The Next Day*, because we were really working in the dark on *The Next Day*. *The Next Day* was full of wrong turns and red herrings whereas this one was pretty straightforward.

Why do you think that might be?

Less time between albums. *The Next Day* came after 10 years of lay-off and now this is just a very short period between this one and The Next Day, what, two years? And actually we started working on this over a year ago, on the demos, so we're in shape. Our ears were in shape.

It's released on Bowie's birthday, like Where Are We Now? three years ago. Are you as excited this time?

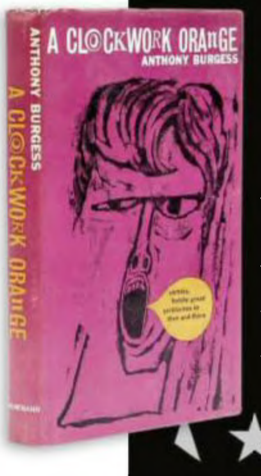
No, because everyone knows it's coming out. Already by January 8 they're going to hear *Blackstar*, which isn't typical of the album but it is typical in the sense that Bowie's changed again. When Where Are We Now? came out I knew that people were almost going to have a heart attack, because he's silent for 10 years, then on the morning of January 8 – here's David Bowie's new single! *That* was exciting. So I don't think we'll ever reproduce that feeling again. I'll be thrilled of course, when it comes out on January 8. I'll be very, very thrilled. I've got to tell you, I've cut the vinyl and the vinyl mastering is *superb*. This is going to be a vinyl you must have. You're not going to paste it up on your wall, this one you're going to play over and over again. The vinyl sounds like good old-fashioned vinyl. The way you dreamt it used to sound like.

DROOG ADDICT

David Bowie's been at the Burgess. It's not the first time…

BLACKSTAR'S STRANGE, loping Girl Loves Me, with its enigmatic "Where the fuck did Monday go?" refrain, includes elements of Nadsat (including "viddy" = see), the version of cant employed by anti-hero Alex and his gang of droogs in A Clockwork Orange, Anthony Burgess's controversial 1962 novel, filmed in 1971 by Stanley Kubrick. It's the latest reflux of Bowie's 40-odd years of interest in the book and film, most evident during the Ziggy Stardust period, seen in Suffragette City's lyric ("Say, Droogie don't crash here!"), Bowie's choice of the film's Moog version of Beethoven's 9th as intro music for the Ziggy live shows, and the Spiders From Mars' image of rock band as future gang, right down to their wrestling boots. "The inset photographs of the inside sleeve for Ziggy owed a lot to the Malcolm McDowell look from the [film] poster," said Bowie in 1993. "I liked the malicious kind of malevolent, vicious quality of those four guys."

Given the singer's interest in dystopian fiction and extreme wordplay, it's unsurprising that Nadsat appealed. "The whole idea of having this phony-speak thing – mock Anthony Burgess-Russian speak that drew on Russian words and put them into the English language, and twisted old Shakespearean words around – this kind of fake language," said Bowie in 1993 "It was like trying to anticipate a society that hadn't happened."



Alamy

Man with his band: Bowie with Donnie McCaslin; (right, from top) Ben Monder; Tim Lefebvre; Jason Linder; (below) their solo albums; (bottom) Mark Guiliana

"YOU SAY SOME STUPID STUFF HE'S GONNA JUMP ALL OVER IT. HE'S VERY SHARP AND WITTY."
TIM LEFEBVRE

SPACE ACES

Me? On a David Bowie album? The Dame's smoking new band are still pinching themselves, discovers **Danny Eccleston**.

DAVID BOWIE RECORDS With Jazz Combo. The headline conjures an idea of a sound, but it's almost certainly not the one that you'll hear on *Blackstar*.

"Well that's true, man," says saxophone player Donny McCaslin, "because the first thing it makes me think of is Tony Bennett!" And as McCaslin confirms, the sound of Bowie on *Blackstar* "could not be more opposite."

McCaslin – and guitarist Ben Monder – came to Bowie's attention on the 2014 Maria Schneider Orchestra session for Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime). Bowie then investigated McCaslin's album *Casting For Gravity* and was drawn to its tough grooves and internalisation of electronica styles, from Boards Of Canada to Deadmau5.

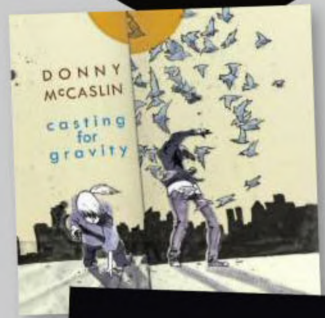
"Occasionally David would use our album as a reference," says McCaslin. "On 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore he said he imagined the solo section being something like Alpha & Omega, which is the Boards Of Canada track we covered, or maybe talk about us getting the intensity we have on Praia Grande…"

Anyone dubious about the core *Blackstar* group's intensity can watch McCaslin, drummer Mark Guiliana, bassist Tim Lefebvre and keyboard player Jason Lindner on YouTube, tearing up the same 55 Bar in New York's West Village where Bowie checked them out.

"He did his research on us," chuckles the fast-talking Lefebvre. "Watched YouTubes of us. He'd bought Mark Guiliana's *Beat Music* record which I'm also on. Usually it's the other way around – you research the guy who hired *you*."

In January 2015, the group turned up at The Magic Shop studio a block east of Bloomingdale's with some trepidation, but were quickly disarmed by Bowie's "totally non-pretentious, non-diva" *mien*.

"He's a charming guy," says Lefebvre. "Donny and Mark and I have been on the road a lot together so there's a lot of ball-busting, and David would join in. He's a very funny guy, and if you say some stupid stuff he's gonna jump all over it. He's very sharp and witty. He was on my case the whole time."



BEAT MUSIC
THE LOS ANGELES IMPROVISATIONS
MARK GUILIANA
TIM LEFEBVRE
JEFF BABKO
TROY ZEIGLER

THE WORK ITSELF, however, was serious stuff, a leap in the dark. "He said right up front, 'Look, I have no idea how this is going to go'," recalls McCaslin.

The team dug in quickly, emotional cues deriving from Bowie's detailed demos, with their "super-quirky" programmed beats and guitar parts. "In fact, a couple of times we asked to play along with the guitar track he had on the demo, because they had such a gritty vibe," says the saxophonist.

Bowie would sing live in the studio as the tracks went down, weaving *Blackstar*'s darkly passionate spell. "And he'd get to that place right away," says McCaslin. "It wasn't, like, five takes in. His singing would be so emotional from the start. It inspired all of us."

As murder, executions and A Clockwork Orange commingle in the lyrics, the group were challenged to match the "super-dark, aggressive and weird" content. Towards the end of the sessions, Bowie brought in the title track; with its doomy portents – "in the Villa Of All Men, stands a solitary candle!" – matched by Arabesque tonalities, it's perhaps not surprising to learn that "it's about Isis". "I thought Blackstar was the peak," says Lefebvre. "Putting it out as a single – that's pretty ballsy."

Between takes the group would pump Bowie for vintage rock'n'roll stories or savour his weird recommendations, like Cherry Wainer, the comically vivacious Hammond queen of Lord Rockingham's XI. If they didn't have the album's credits list to prove it actually happened, they might struggle to believe it. "It's still fucking with my head," says Lefebvre.

"There was one time I was overdubbing some atmospheric sounds in the control room," recalls Ben Monder, "and David was on the couch and he goes, 'Could you come over and do that on a daily basis?' That's a pretty amazing thing to hear from David Bowie."

Meanwhile, there was nothing to add weight to rumours of the singer's health concerns: "He's spry as hell! He's sharp as a knife, he's jumping around," enthuses Lefebvre. "And look at his output right now: the album, the play…"

"Here's David Bowie, 68 years old and he can do whatever he wants, right?" concludes McCaslin. "He can do a Greatest Hits tour, he can keep putting out Greatest Hits records, and instead he's recording with *us*? He's going for what he hears. He's taking chances. He's such an *artist*, man. I hope I'm that way when I'm 68."

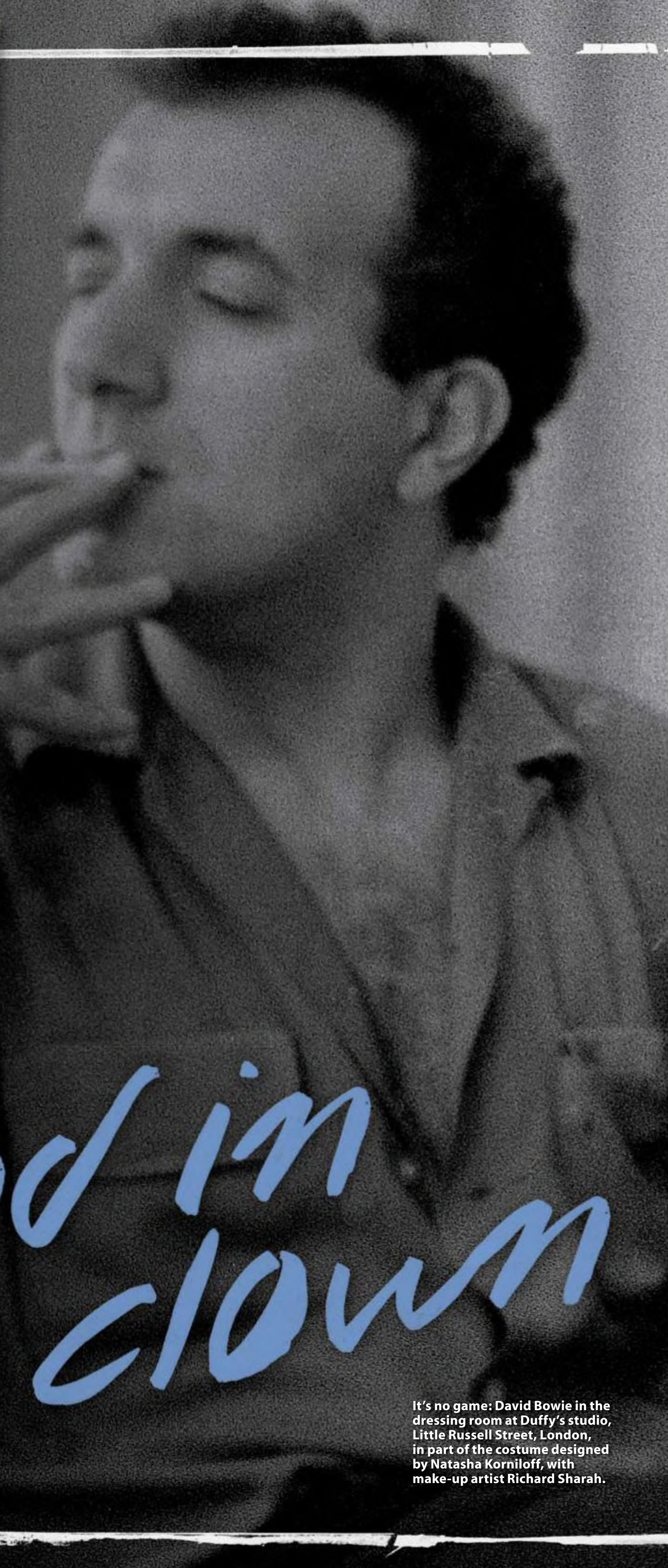
Deneka Peniston, John Rogers

David Bowie
Scary Monsters
monsters

DAVID BOWIE BEGAN THE '80s AS WE FIND HIM NOW — ENSCONCED IN NEW YORK, DABBLING WITH THEATRE, CREATIVELY KEEN — AND THE ALBUM THAT EMERGED WOULD DEFINE THE COMING DECADE: BLITZ KIDS, AVANT-FUNK, DRUNKEN TOWNSHEND AND ALL. YET *SCARY MONSTERS* WAS AS MUCH A STRANGE END AS A FRESH BEGINNING. "IT WAS A HISTORY-CHANGING SHIFT," DISCOVERS PAUL TRYNKA.

PORTRAIT BY DUFFY

Send in the clown



It's no game: David Bowie in the dressing room at Duffy's studio, Little Russell Street, London, in part of the costume designed by Natasha Korniloff, with make-up artist Richard Sharah.

Photo Duffy ©Duffy Archive (www.duffyphotographer.com)

THE COMFORT ZONE IS A NICE PLACE TO LIVE, BUT A BAD PLACE TO MAKE music. That was the mission statement of David Bowie throughout the 1970s, a mission statement that had been formalised, almost, when friend and production guru Brian Eno wrote out random instructions for the musicians to follow when making *Lodger*, the final panel of what Bowie would call his Berlin Triptych. But the random can become predictable – and by the end of 1979, David Bowie's radical new experience would be normality: a move to New York, immersion in the theatrical scene, and an album recorded by rota, like clockwork. The comfort zone, it turned out, could be fertile territory.

"It was a wonderful, wonderful time," says Carlos Alomar, Bowie's then-bandleader. "Everybody was happy. On a family level it was very rich, and on an artistic level too. You'd have John Lennon coming over, you'd have Art Garfunkel coming over, artists, so many other people. We were having a great time."

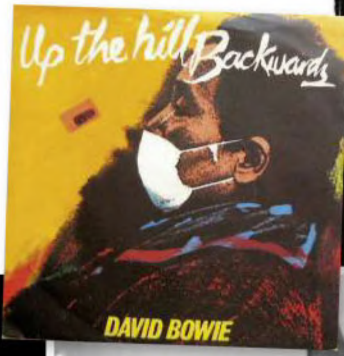
The move to 26th Street, New York, where Bowie lived with long-term confidante Coco Schwab in an apartment in the same block as Alomar and his wife, singer Robin Clark, marked the end of an unprecedented period in Bowie's life. Dropping out of sight to an anonymous apartment in Berlin's Schöneberg district, and recording three radical masterpieces was only part of it. As well as re-engineering pop music, Bowie had re-engineered himself. In his early days, he'd namechecked William Burroughs or Aleister Crowley after the sketchiest of investigation. In Berlin he immersed himself in the German New Expressionist Art Scene, studying the work of woodcut artist Frans Masereel and playwright Bertolt Brecht to the extent that, when he met Brecht scholar John Willett and Cambridge don Louis Marks to discuss collaborating on a Brecht project, the pair concluded: "he knows more than anyone we know!" Bowie had left Berlin artistically refreshed, psychologically stable and – thanks to 1978's comprehensive Isolar II Tour (commemorated on the *Stage* live album) – financially solvent. And he was ready to work.

FOR ALL ITS STRENGTHS AS AN ALBUM, THE ECLECTIC *Lodger*'s process had been overwrought – "too many chiefs and not enough Indians" was how violinist Simon House described it. Bowie's new project commenced in New York's Power Station barely 11 months later, but this time around, the plan was for less theory, more grooves. Alomar, plus drummer Dennis Davis and bassist George Murray, worked up the initial backdrops alongside Bowie and co-producer Tony Visconti. "We definitely wanted to feel we didn't have to do any more experimentation," recalls the guitarist.

By now, Bowie had written songs in just about every conceivable way: on the guitar, on the piano, using demos, using chunks of sound played by studio musicians. *Scary Monsters*' approach was different again; there would be songs assembled from grooves worked up in the studio, as in the Berlin period, but the process was stripped down, with less theorising, and opened up, with more improvisation by the core musicians. It's possible that there were demos of the odd song along the way – and Scream Like A Baby was a rework of I Am A Laser by Bowie's 1973 side-project, the Astronettes – but that's not generally how the album was constructed. The core trio might hear a chord sequence sketched out by Bowie on acoustic guitar, or be told to improvise around a Bo Diddley rhythm pattern (Up The Hill Backwards started this way), or to work on a particular style or groove, and then the musicians "played the best we could," says Alomar.

The process might sound meandering, but it wasn't – Bowie was even more than usually focused. "He walked in with a clipboard, had a moustache, and was wearing a full-length leather coat, with Japanese sandals, and a big wooden crucifix hanging around his neck," remembers guitar-synth player Chuck Hammer, one of the last musicians to be called in. "He was very open, but very organised." The clipboard was used to track the various ideas: "David is

> "BOWIE WALKED IN WITH A CLIPBOARD, A MOUSTACHE, JAPANESE SANDALS AND A BIG WOODEN CRUCIFIX HANGING AROUND HIS NECK." Chuck Hammer



Fashionable man: Bowie on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, September 5, 1980; (left) Chuck Hammer performing with Lou Reed at the Bottom Line, New York City, June 1979.

always organised, truly organised,” says Alomar. “He knows what he wants – but he doesn't know until he hears it.”

On *Lodger*, Alomar, Davis and Murray would have played songs, or sections of songs, then it was up to Eno to decide on the keepers. This time, Bowie was more assertive, calling the shots as Visconti worked in perfect sync, intuitively working out what needed to be saved. According to the producer, their aim from the outset was a more commercial work, but it was only one of many defining factors, for even the basic grooves felt different this time around. “When we came back in,” says Alomar, “there was that feeling of, OK, let's get back to work and do some real rock'n'roll stuff. *Station To Station* had been more gritty – and that's what we wanted, more grit.”

Each song would be curated by Bowie, but with the individual musicians providing the components. Drummer Dennis Davis remembers being asked for one mid-paced groove, to which Murray added the simplest descending bass figure. Eventually, this would become Fashion; yet, at the time, the rhythm section had no idea of how the track would end up. “We would do our part and leave,” says Davis. “Then when the record came out, sometimes I'd be thinking, Is that really me?”

While the overall feel of *Scary Monsters* would be distinctly new, even the more novel elements had their precedents. On *Low*, piano player Roy Young had been a surprise guest, not least to himself; this time around, Bruce Springsteen pianist Roy Bittan was an off-the-wall inclusion whose contribution turned out to be pivotal. Perhaps the best example is the opening, vaguely Oriental keyboard melody on Ashes To Ashes; this started as a sweet, almost tasteful piano part that was warped via Visconti's beloved Eventide H910 Harmonizer into something far more Bowie: “Tony was very good at that,” says keyboardist Simon (then known as Andy) Clark, “he was an inspiring producer. He could take an idea and push it further.” Yet Bittan, “a lovely, lovely gentleman”, according to Alomar, instinctively understood an intrinsic requirement of working on a Bowie track: “his ideas fitted in, because it's an issue of being able to play and not fill in the holes.”

CHUCK HAMMER WAS ANOTHER TYPICAL PIECE OF Bowie casting – both random, and well planned. He'd first encountered the singer on tour with Lou Reed in 1979. During an eventful evening, throughout which Lou drank heavily, Bowie charmed the young guitar-synth prodigy, even suggesting that perhaps they would one day “be working together”. The conversation went hardly any further, for this was the night Bowie suggested Reed “clean up his act”, an incensed Lou slapped him across both cheeks, and everyone was bundled out. It was the best part of a year later when Hammer got the call to turn up at the Power Station.

Almost as soon as he walked in, Visconti cued up a complex, intriguing song provisionally entitled People Are Turning To Gold and Hammer started to work out what he could do: “I was more interested, at that time, in constructing [sound] like a painter would do. He just played me that one pass without any vocals, we played it back again once, and it was pretty clear what I needed to do. It was a totally intuitive process.”

Bowie communicated in a relaxed way, giving Hammer space and explaining via gestures as much as words. As he layered textures via his Roland GR-300 guitar synth, working up a choir sound in one section over perhaps four stereo passes, he'd walk back into the control room to see Visconti had already grouped and organised the parts. “When I heard it back I was stunned. I really hadn't heard anything back at that level, the idea of all those multitracked textures. It was so fresh. And it was… beautiful.” Yet Hammer was as much struck by the team's work ethic as their creativity: “It was the intuition *and* how hard they worked.”

It was already becoming apparent that People Are Turning To Gold was something special. “I did love it immensely and knew it was one of the major tracks on the album,” said Visconti. ➢

Getty Images, ©Chuck Hammer, Rex

watching the wildlife

In the run-up to *Scary Monsters*, Bowie had an eye on the new wave of Bowie-inspired stars. Friend or foe? It rather depended…

Smash
HITS
REE
GARY NUMAN
BAD MANNERS
ROCKPILE

> “MAYBE HE FELT THAT THIS WAS STEALING HIS CROWN SOMEWHAT.”
> Gary Numan

Gary Numan: “In my school, there were hardcore T.Rex fans and then there were hardcore Bowie fans, and I was loyal to Bolan. But then I heard *Aladdin Sane*, and I just thought, Oh God this is insane! Then you start going back, and I bought everything, right up until *Scary Monsters*. Funnily enough, that was the last Bowie album I ever bought.

Was it upsetting when he appeared to take against me? [Bowie told the NME in 1980 that Numan had“confined himself terrifically” – not quite a slag-off.] A little bit at first, because I was very young and I thought the sun shone out of his arse, I really did. I had been a massive fan. But I'm not an idiot, I quickly realised that he has his own problems. You know, he'll see something like me arguably as a threat. Maybe he felt this was stealing his crown somewhat. He must have had very uncomfortable feelings, so later I understood.

A lot of people have said the Teenage Wildlife lyric is largely about me. But I think the line is ‘A broken-nosed mogul are you’. Now I didn't have a broken nose, but I know Steve Strange did. I think that's more about Steve Strange than it ever was about me, and yet Steve Strange is the star of the Ashes To Ashes video. I thought, Is that backstabbing? Are you trying to worm your way into the new wave of things that you seem to be against? Do you like it or don't you?

Did he have me chucked off the Kenny Everett show? Yeah, that was true unfortunately. It was the 1979 Christmas special. David Mallet had directed my bit, then he said, ‘Bowie's going to be here on Thursday – why don't you to come back and watch?’ I was beside myself with joy, to actually be in the same room as David Bowie! So I go there, and there's a little side room, lots of people were there – Bob Geldof, Paula Yates. At some point there was obviously a bit of a problem, and David Mallet comes and gets me and says, ‘David doesn't want you in here.’ And I got sent out like a naughty schoolboy. Next thing, I get a phone call a few days after that saying, ‘You're not going to be on that particular programme, we're going to put you on a different one later on.’

I was really gutted. Before, he'd felt like this untouchable, god-like figure, but then I realised he could be as nervous and bitter, or scared as anyone. He's absolutely human and fallible, and it strips away that mystique.

More recently, he said some very lovely things about me, so there's absolutely no problem between him and me any more. And I still think that what he did was amazing. And Ashes to Ashes – I loved that to bits. I could just listen to that forever. For me that was the end of my Bowie era.”

Martyn Ware: “Bowie was a massive influence on The Human League. It was obvious that he regarded everything he did as an art project – not only was he inventing himself but also he was inventing whole worlds. And he left room for you to populate them yourself.

Low was an epiphany. I remember we were rehearsing in this derelict shop in Sheffield we called The Studio – we were The Future then – and Adi Newton came in, saying that John Peel was playing the whole album, start to finish, without interruption, on Friday night. We sat there reverentially at 10 o'clock – on medium wave, which has its own charisma – and listened to the whole thing.

He came to see us December 1978, at I think the Greyhound in Fulham [others remember it as the Nashville, February 1979], a real toilet of a venue that only held 200 at the most. Floor to ceiling graffiti, no door on the dressing room. He walked into the room with his entourage. David Bowie! With Coco his assistant and about 10 other people – I've still got a photo. He saw that gig and the next week he was in the NME saying ‘The Human League is the future of music’. It might have happened sooner, because we were playing the Marquee about six weeks before. It was sold out, the hottest gig in town in every way. Apparently Bowie and Iggy turned up and the bouncers were so stupid they turned them away!

He was top of the list every time we made a BEF album, but he always said no – I think we all revolve around his sun. *Diamond Dogs* for me is the apogee – a perfectly realised concept. *Station To Station*, *Low* and *“Heroes”* are such hard albums to follow. *Scary Monsters* is Bowie entering a more reflective phase; Ashes To Ashes is like a sonic autobiography and Fashion is like sound collage, way ahead of its time.

After *Scary Monsters*, it's as if the weight of pressure on him to sell records becomes almost overwhelming. But it's like that joke about sex – however bad the sex is, it's still sex. And Bowie albums are like that. Whatever it is, it's still Bowie.”

As told to Danny Eccleston

Teenage wildlife: Bowie fans The Human League; (top) Gary Numan, pop mag cover star.

Free your mind: Bowie with Tony Visconti during the *Scary Monsters* sessions; (insets, left) Pete Townshend; Robert Fripp; (below) the Abba single replaced at UK Number 1 by Ashes To Ashes; in Fashion; (bottom) Edward Bell.

ABBA
THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL · ELAINE

David Bowie
Ashes to ashes

Fashion
David Bowie

“Chuck was very experimental for us; we had never seen or heard a synth guitar before. It was 50/50 whether he would make the cut at all.” With the backing track more or less assembled, “David waited two months to write the lyrics,” says Visconti, “and finally called it Ashes To Ashes.”

On the *“Heroes”* album especially, Bowie had focused on working up lyrics almost instantaneously, tapping into the moment like his friend Iggy Pop. This time around, most of the lyrics followed the example of Ashes To Ashes, crafted well after the backing tracks. Elegantly constructed, dense with allusions, they were especially notable for being the first to acknowledge Bowie’s own history (like Ashes To Ashes’ Major Tom backstory), or else (as in Teenage Wildlife) his influence on those who had followed him. The album, integrating players like Hammer who’d grown up on his music (“It was a way of coming back to an earlier point. The timing was right to integrate the information”), simultaneously celebrated his now-iconic status and rejected the idea of being put on a pedestal.

Emphasising the crosstalk between Bowie and a new generation, there was even a *Scary Monsters* guest spot planned for ex-Television singer-guitarist Tom Verlaine, on his own song Kingdom Come. In his autobiography, Visconti remembered the guitarist, looking “down on his luck and lugubrious” and having as many as 30 rental amps delivered to the Power Station. Verlaine proceeded to audition each in turn until Bowie and Visconti lost interest and left him to it. “I don’t think we ever used a note,” wrote the producer.

SOME MONTHS AFTER THE INITIAL SESSIONS, BOWIE left 26th Street for London to complete the album’s vocals, mostly at Visconti’s Good Earth studios in Soho. It was here that Robert Fripp’s skronky lead guitar parts were dubbed – the King Crimson man hopping off a tour bus from Leeds to help transform the ugly-duckling Jamaica into the extraordinary avant-funk of Fashion. “There’s nothing you feel less like in the world than turning out a burning solo at 10.30 in the morning,” Fripp later noted, but perhaps the ennui helped – he had the song’s warped mix of sarcasm and dread to a tee.

Another fleeting visitor at Good Earth was Bowie hero Pete Townshend, who arrived “in a foul, laconic mood”, according to Visconti. He left, having contributed some trademark windmills to Because You’re Young, in barely less of a grump. “He asked for a bottle of wine,” wrote Visconti. “I asked if he wanted red or white wine and he snarled back, ‘There’s no such thing as white wine!’”

Synth player Simon Clark, best known for his contributions with Bill Nelson’s Be-Bop Deluxe, was the last to contribute. Clark had worked with Visconti on a Zaine Griff album, and had ended up recording the backing track for Bowie’s Kenny Everett Television Show slot in December 1979 [see Watching The Wildlife panel]. He reckons Bowie and Visconti would have preferred Eno, but the latter was away in Africa; so it was that Clark turned up at Good Earth with his Mini Moog and Yamaha CS-80 to add the finishing touches to four songs, the first of which was Fashion: “I set everything up, then when I turned round David was sitting behind me. He said to me, ‘Can you do a Wah sound?’ So I got the sound up and we tried with tape. And I remember thinking, This isn’t working very well. Then there was one of those awkward silences.” But as the ideas flowed, the electricity in the room increased, with a visibly excited Bowie discussing ideas for titles and other details.

Like Hammer, Clark was taken by Visconti’s production mastery: “Tony was always a very exciting producer. Whenever you left a session with him, you felt you’d done more than you normally could.” Visconti himself reckons he learned from Bowie, or from Buddhism, the need to free yourself from “the mire of options” – to make a quick decision, and free yourself. The strategy worked, says Clark. “With Visconti, you’d have tracks with backing vocals and he’d bounce them down straight away, when another producer would copy it onto another tape to make a decision later. With him it was, ‘Done’. And the work would keep flowing.”

For Clark’s second day in the studio, he worked intensively on Scream Like A Baby, before Bowie took off for a photoshoot. Thus it was Visconti who nursed him through Ashes To Ashes’ four keyboard parts, including the Mini Moog solo. “That felt like the right thing,” says Clark, “to push the envelope. And that was it.”

It’s perhaps a little obvious to highlight Ashes To Ashes, destined to become only Bowie’s second UK Number 1 single, in August 1980. Yet the song warrants it – both as an example of cutting-edge sound collage, and of old school songwriting, exemplified by its archetypal Bowie bridge sections, supporting two melodies –

> “BOWIE SAW THE ANGLE. WHICH WAS VERY OF ITS TIME: DECADENT GLAMOUR.”
>
> Edward Bell

Rex, Getty Images, courtesy of Edward Bell, courtesy of Tony Visconti

the classy, swooning, "the shrieking of nothing is killing me", and later the more impassioned cry that "I've never done anything out of the blue." It was Bowie invoking his own horror of mediocrity in the context of one of his most sublime songs.

THE STARS WERE ALIGNING. BOWIE HAD A KILLER LEAD-off single and, in Fashion, an arresting follow-up. *Scary Monsters*' sleeve art also played its part – striking and glamorous, paying knowing tribute to Bowie's past. The singer had met painter and illustrator Edward Bell, a mainstay of Vogue and Tatler, at the latter's private view in a Covent Garden gallery, after which the pair went out for dinner. "David said to me, 'I need a sleeve for my new album'," recalled Bell. "'And I need it next week.' So I said, No problem."

The original concept was for Bell, whose larger-than-life paintings were normally worked up from photos, to base the image on a shoot by Duffy, himself a photographer of renown, not least via his sleeve for *Aladdin Sane*. Bell duly turned up for the photo session to see David dressed in a Pierrot costume – an outfit with plenty of historical connotations, for it referenced Bowie's apprenticeship with mime artist Lindsay Kemp, as well as George Underwood's illustrations for the Space Oddity sleeve, and the costume had been crafted by Natasha Korniloff, who had become romantically involved with David back in 1968, much to Kemp's chagrin.

Duffy had set up the shoot with Bowie in the costume plus full make-up, a concept which Bell wasn't impressed by: "I said, Take the fuckin' hat off!!" Bell started taking his own photos, encouraging Bowie to mess with the costume: "I wanted him to tear the clown thing apart and I felt it worked. He had too much make-up on, but it looked good when smudged. But what was so good was, that he didn't just stand there. He just saw the angle. Which was very of its time: decadent glamour."

The final design was based on an eight feet by four feet painting which Bell crafted after his own photo. Yet the cover retains one of Duffy's shots, used as a ripped backdrop to the main painting – you can just see the shadow of a clown with a cigarette, in a distinctive pose – that of the *"Heroes"* cover.

A superb video for Ashes To Ashes, shot by David Mallet on the shore in Hastings, was the finishing touch. Mallet had been part of the Kenny Everett team who'd filmed Bowie's December 1979 appearance – including the mind-boggling 'padded cell' revival of Space Oddity – while the treatment's futuristically-garbed cast members, including style leader and Bowie obsessive Steve Strange, had been recruited by Bowie himself from the dancefloor at London's fashionable Blitz Club. It was typical Bowie – seeking out the new thing and drawing it into an alliance – and when he kissed Strange to say thanks for his help, the Visage singer told me enthusiastically, "I got some tongue."

SCARY MONSTERS' ENTRANCE COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN better timed. "That album was an incredible, nirvana moment," claims Chuck Hammer. "I really felt the decade being launched. It was a history-changing shift." But with his stamp already raised above the embryonic '80s, Bowie missed his chance to seal the deal. Why?

First, there was a creative diversion. Bowie had been approached to take over the title role in a Broadway production of Bernard Pomerance's play The Elephant Man during the early sessions for *Scary Monsters*. He accepted almost instantaneously and had hardly finished mixing the album before he was wrapped up in rehearsals. This was celebrity casting at its most overt, yet co-star Ken Ruta insists that Bowie's rendering of the deformed hero John Merrick revealed him every inch the actor: "There was no playing the star, no pretence. David just did the part."

While Bowie's commitments – previews in Denver and Chicago followed by a New York run – were considerable, Simon Clark still remembers conversations about touring *Scary Monsters*. But how seriously that was considered is hard to judge, since everything changed on December 8 when Mark David Chapman shot John Lennon dead, and an Elephant Man programme, plus a photograph of Bowie leaving the Booth Theatre, were found among the murderer's belongings. Bowie finished the rest of the run in a daze, and then fled to Geneva.

Back in November, the singer had told Rolling Stone's Kurt Loder of his hopes for a relatively normal existence. "Over the last three and a half years, I've been getting happier and happier," he said. "Happier in my realisation that I can face up to things a lot better than I could when I was living a heavily rock'n'roll life in America. I feel happy that I can travel about in some kind of anonymity and circulate within cities I've always dreamed of going to see."

Who knows to what degree Bowie's dream of recognition as an artist-worker ("a quasi-Renaissance man, you know?"), divorced from the escalating madness of celebrity, was dashed by Lennon's killing. What's clear is that his next musical work, when it came, would launch a new phase of his career, and reveal a new recalibration.

Ironically, *Let's Dance* – made with a new team, as Chic's Nile Rodgers replaced Visconti – appeared designed to take him to the very stratosphere of the fame he seemed to mistrust. Subsequently, *Scary Monsters* was destined to become the Last Great Bowie album, its reputation invoked by fans whenever a promising new record surfaced. Yet it seems even more obvious that the circumstances of its creation – that mix of artful anonymity and family atmosphere, plus the close collaboration with Tony Visconti – make the album a lodestone for its creator, too.

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Sometimes I think my head is so big because it is so full of dreams
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THE ELEPHANT MAN
BOOTH THEATRE

Cracked actor: Bowie as John Merrick in The Elephant Man on Broadway at the Booth Theatre, NYC, October 1980; (inset, top) Steve Strange, February 1980.

Ron Scherl/Arenapal, Alamy

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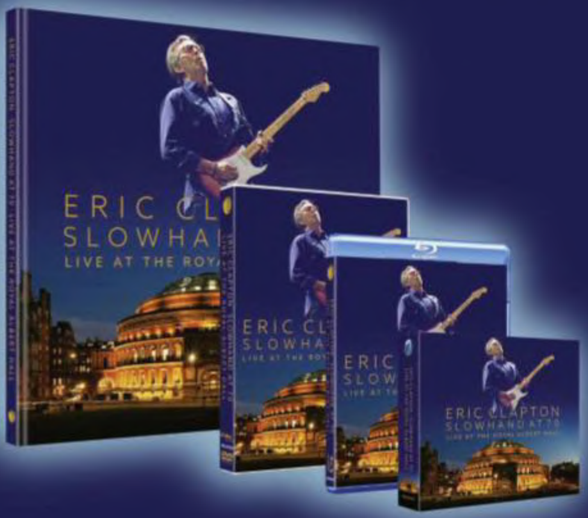

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> "They whoop like contestants at a pig holler"
>
> **ANDY FYFE SEES JASON ISBELL ANOINTED IN NASHVILLE, P118**

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide. **CD** COMPACT DISC **DL** DOWNLOAD **ST** STREAMING **LP** VINYL **MC** CASSETTE **DVD** DIGITAL VIDEO DISC **C** IN CINEMAS **BR** BLU-RAY

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MOJO CLASSIC	EXCELLENT	GOOD	DISAPPOINTING	BEST AVOIDED	DEPLORABLE

To boldly go

What comes after *The Next Day*? Wild cosmic jazz represented by a black star, of course. Hello again, spaceboy, says **Keith Cameron**. Illustration by **Chris Nurse**.

David Bowie

★★★★

★

RCA. CD/DL/LP

On January 8, 2016, his 69th birthday, David Bowie's new album is released, exactly three years since Where Are We Now? appeared unannounced, a gift from a missing star, heralding his return from the wilderness with *The Next Day*. Nostalgic and conciliatory, that album felt like a reward for those who had kept the faith. But was this one last hurrah before slipping into retirement? Or might he attempt another act of regeneration?

2014's reverse-chronological collection *Nothing Has Changed* contained an auspicious portent: Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime), seven minutes of melodramatic voice and big-band improv in collaboration with the Maria Schneider Orchestra. Sue is re-recorded here with heightened vigour thanks to Bowie's core personnel on this album, a smoking group of New York jazz musicians, alumni of Schneider (herself a pupil of Gil Evans), who under the direction of Bowie and co-producer Tony Visconti drive ★ to almighty levels of intensity.

There's little conciliation but plenty bewilderment amid its opening 10 minutes, where the curtain rises on Bowie declaiming tremulously over a bed of syncopated electronic beats and Arabic drones. This is the title song, elements of which soundtrack television diamond heist drama The Last Panthers, though Bowie's priestly incantation suggests an occult murder mystery: "On the day of execution, only women kneel and smile/Aaah…" The claustrophobic mood heightens amid tumbling drums and skronking saxophone, until bright string notes herald a new dawn, and practically a new song. Now there's sunshine in Bowie's voice as he announces a leader's passing – "Somebody took his place and bravely cried: I'm a blackstar!" – but his maniacal uttering of "blackstar" suggests trouble ahead. Bowie stirs a comedic stew of oppositional voices ("I'm not a gangster/I'm not a film star/I'm not a pop star") as ominous strings muster. Almost imperceptibly the fearful mood of the first third reasserts itself, with Bowie now in a lower register to a straight beat, as if 'Blackstar''s dire consequences have been wrought. Burbling flute ushers the piece to a close.

If heads are reeling, there is no respite: Bowie inhales twice to count-off 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore, with tenor sax monster Donny McCaslin exhorting drummer Mark Guiliana and bassist Tim Lefebvre to keep throttling the offbeat pummel until Bowie drops his priceless opening lyric: "Then she punched me like a dude." Pianist Jason Lindner joins the hysteria, ratcheting needles further into the red, while Bowie slurs Jimmy Durante-style, and thrice whoops in excelsis. Memories of the primitive home demo version on the Sue B-side are outmuscled amid the sheer escalatory thrill of a band tearing up the roadmap.

Proceedings are reoriented towards the known Bowie by the subsequent Lazarus. A pensive guitar line signals a nakedly unaffected vocal – "Look up here, I'm in heaven/I've got scars that can't be seen" – as the sax whirls in sympathy. Spare and emotive, there's deep intrigue for forensically inclined rune-readers amid such lyrics as "By the time I got to New York/I was living like a king", or "I'll be free just like that blue bird"; Lazarus is also the title song of his new musical theatre adaptation of The Man Who Fell To Earth.

Halfway through and it's breathtakingly apparent that David Bowie isn't so much back on the horse as riding bareback towards a cliff-edge. The new recording of Sue (Or In A Season Of Crime) compensates for its reduced brass powerage by spiking the city-primeval rhythms with distressed noise, Ben Monder's guitar suddenly prominent. Then, a supreme mood-shift: with its minimal robotic groove, Girl Loves Me sees the syncopation game upped by the singer himself as he deploys a variant of A Clockwork Orange's nadsat vocabulary – "Hey cheena!" "Titty up, malchick say!" – plus choice use of the f-word. In piercing voice, with DFA's James Murphy on percussion, here's Bowie reminding 21st century paranoid androids that he patented the form.

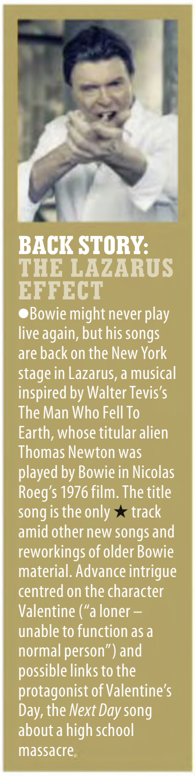
Dollar Days restores the primacy of saxophone, albeit the instrument's emollient aspect; in New York jazz argot, this is more Supper Club than Knitting Factory. Bathed in translucent piano and guitar, Bowie sounds wistful, but beware what lurks behind his velvet rope: "I'm dying to push their backs against the wall and fool them all again." The song's confluence of stentorian guitar with McCaslin's solo saxophone is overwhelming, segueing directly into the motorik pulse of the album's final masterstroke. On a record that heretofore has barely referenced his past at all, Bowie exits with a song entitled I Can't Give Everything Away, directly quoting the yearning harmonica from *Low*'s A New Career In A New Town. The lyric is rueful – "Seeing more and feeling less/Saying no but meaning yes" – the music ecstatic, and that's even before Ben Monder's transcendent liquid guitar solo spirits its patron, repeating the title refrain, to the horizon's vanishing point and this brilliant, confounding record ebbs away.

★ somewhat recalls *Station To Station* in form – epic multipart title-track opener, seven songs in 41 minutes, odd atmospherics, rhythmic heft, tremendous singing – but otherwise there's no obvious precedent in the Bowie canon. Real blood pumps in its grooves, unlike his '90s experimental albums *Outside* and *Earthling* where so much energy was expended chasing the technological *Zeitgeist*. David Bowie's genius here has been in jettisoning his regular cohorts, whose safe pairs of hands might have taken these songs to a less visceral, more orthodox place, instead of this new frontier from which to contemplate innerspace. He can't give everything away – but this will more than suffice.

KEY TRACKS

- Blackstar
- 'Tis A Pity She Was A Whore
- Girl Loves Me
- I Can't Give Everything Away

"DAVID BOWIE ISN'T SO MUCH BACK ON THE HORSE AS RIDING BAREBACK TOWARDS A CLIFF-EDGE."



BACK STORY: THE LAZARUS EFFECT

●Bowie might never play live again, but his songs are back on the New York stage in Lazarus, a musical inspired by Walter Tevis's The Man Who Fell To Earth, whose titular alien Thomas Newton was played by Bowie in Nicolas Roeg's 1976 film. The title song is the only ★ track amid other new songs and reworkings of older Bowie material. Advance intrigue centred on the character Valentine ("a loner – unable to function as a normal person") and possible links to the protagonist of Valentine's Day, the *Next Day* song about a high school massacre.

Baroness

★★★★

Purple

ABRAXAN HYMNS. CD/DL/LP

Prog-metal behemoths triumph over adversity.

Poleaxed in 2012 by a near-fatal tour-bus crash that prompted the exit of their rhythm section and side-lined frontman John Baizley as he recovered from horrific injuries, three years on, Baroness have delivered their masterpiece: an album grounding their cosmic heaviosity with earthbound, compelling drama, an unabashed statement of Big Rock Ambition in the lineage of Metallica's *Black*, but with no de-fanging compromise. There's a might to even their most complex riffage – the blistering torrent of opener Morningstar, the bolting tempos of Kerosene – that impresses, while Shock Me displays a formidable grasp for the anthemic possibilities of melody. On Chlorine And Wine, meanwhile – containing the album's most explicit references to the accident and its aftermath – major chords, hard-edged harmonies and Queen-style symphonics combine for something at once epic and affecting, fulfilling metal's grandiose promise with not a single note of pointless excess.

Stevie Chick

NOTS

★★★

We Are Nots

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Winningly frenetic punk clamour from the birth place of rock'n'roll.

Hailing from Memphis and sharing a US label with such southern-skronk luminaries as The Oblivians and Reigning Sound, NOTS have already given their city's musical underground a jolt with this fuzz-punk full-length. Recorded with local boy Doug Easley, the four-piece's debut is one breakneck statement of intent, hurtling by in under half an hour even with two extra tracks on the UK edition. A boisterous melee of snapping drums, jagged guitars and insistent synth motifs, opening sprinter Insect Eyes leaps off the blocks like a roller derby ruckus between Bikini Kill and The Screamers. Sticking to this uptempo template, any suggestion of sameness is speedily erased by Alexandra Eastburn's arsenal of skewed electronic embellishments and the breathless exuberance the group bring to the party.

Andrew Carden

CeeLo Green

★★★

Heart Blanche

WARNER BROS. CD/DL

Controversial singer's fifth solo salvo.

Three years have elapsed since stentorian-voiced Thomas DeCarlo Callaway (to give him his full real name) released his last album but during the interim he's been making headlines for indiscreet social media gaffs related to his own seemingly turbulent and troubled private life. Now, the outspoken 41-year-old returns to what he does best – making music. Never content to be pigeon-holed as an orthodox R&B singer, this new album is as quixotic and wilfully idiosyncratic as his previous *oeuvre*. It proves a veritable sonic smorgasbord, ranging from soaring jangly guitar pop (Est. 1980s) and searing soul balladry (Sign Of The Times) to grandiose, camped-up disco-funk (the anthem-like Tonight, a euphoric paean to hedonism). Elsewhere, Race Against Time mines a psych-pop groove while the sunshine-drenched MOR of Better Late Than Never comes across like Gilbert O'Sullivan on Viagra.

Charles Waring

IT'S A HOLIDAY SOUL PARTY
SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS

Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings

★★★

It's A Holiday Soul Party

DAPTONE. CD/DL/LP

Seven new tunes, plus four ghosts from Christmas releases past.

The measure of any Christmas record should be taken not by "Is it good?" but rather, "Will I *really* be excited to pull it out each December?" MOJO predicts Sharon Jones's *Holiday Soul Party* will sit comfortably in years to come next to Stax's *Soul Christmas* and *The Ventures' Christmas Album*. Jones actually one-ups the Ventures with a frenetic version of White Christmas you can do the swim to. Big Bulbs, meanwhile, redeems adolescent lyrics with boogie-woogie swing vocals. Of course, the bulk of the album grooves on the vintage R&B sounds beloved by the Dap-Kings. Where most takes on Silent Night aim to capture otherworldly adoration, Jones's recording conjures the achingly human awe of a new mother. And don't forget the Dap-Kings' original, 8 Days (Of Hanukkah) – which beats every recording ever made of Twelve Days Of Christmas.

Chris Nelson

Elegantly haunted pop: Jennylee sheds Warpaint.

Jennylee

★★★

right on!

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

Warpaint bassist steps further into the shadows on solo debut.

Last year's self-titled second Warpaint album located a sweet spot where their soft-focus spook aligned itself with serpentine groove on an album of subtle, seductive power. Bassist/vocalist Jenny Lee Lindberg's debut solo album continues that conversation between shadow and light, possessing a home-recorded charm and minimal vibe where every element – the skittering, wilful bassline of yearning love song He Fresh, the off-kilter multi-tracked harmonies she weaves with herself on Offerings and Bully – is vital to this elegantly haunted pop. *right on!* (punctuation artist's own) seesaws between spectral moments of introspection and bristling passages of electric activity, and if the latter prove most memorable – like the jagged punk-funk of Boom Boom, with its hooks drawing slowly into focus, its rhythms falling in and out of sync – the former are just as essential for establishing the album's smartly gothic, deftly troubled, ultimately captivating ambience.

Stevie Chick

Beach House

★★★★

Thank Your Lucky Stars

BELLA UNION. CD/LP/DL

Baltimore duo release super-quick follow-up to *Depression Cherry.*

Thank Your Lucky Stars

If Jackie 'White Horses' Lee had been kidnapped by an evil genius intent on having her record achingly-cool, Velvets-tinged pop songs for use in high-budget automobile ads, it might have sounded something like this – which is not to say that *TYLS* is anything less than classy. Beach House's second album in three months underlines just how precision-stylised their frosty, often glacially-slow dream-pop has become, all those clapped-out sounding beatboxes, autumnal organs and ruminative, bruised guitars aligned just so. To these ears, the album certainly isn't the "great departure from our last few records" that Victoria Legrand and Alex Scally bill it as, but Majorette, All Your Yeahs and Rough Song point to a unit almost scared to down tools lest the magic 2015 has bestowed upon them should fade. Don't miss Legrand's falsetto leaps in The Traveller, either – they're spellbinding.

James McNair

Coldplay

★★

A Head Full Of Dreams

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

Final fantasy: Coldplay's last stand?

Invoking the Harry Potter books, Chris Martin recently hinted that Coldplay's seventh album might be their last. If true, *A Head Full Of Dreams* would stand as a hefty compendium of their strengths (thinking big, reaching out) and weaknesses (not unlike their strengths). Kaleidoscope's sampling of Barack Obama singing Amazing Grace at Charleston shooting victim Clementa C Pinckney's funeral shows their U2-style sense of high seriousness, while the starry guest-list conveys their equally high rock-elite status. Sagging between these lofty points, however, is the music. The supposed rebound from 2014's uncoupled *Ghost Stories*, it remains glutinously earnest, low on drama or fun. Shoulder-patting ballad Everglow, with backing vocals from Gwyneth Paltrow, and Up & Up's blithe reassurances are Coldplay in safe mode, yet even the most dancefloor-inspired tracks are heavy-footed, Hymn For The Weekend only partly leavened by Beyoncé's contribution. A big record, but one that leaves little mark.

Victoria Segal

Lisa Ronson

★★★★

Emperors Of Medieval Japan

MANIAC SQUAT. CD/LP

Impressive debut album from the daughter of one of Hull's finest.

LISA RONSON
EMPERORS OF MEDIEVAL JAPAN

Mick Ronson helped David Bowie make some of the signature works of the glam era and daughter Lisa carries on the Ronsonian spirit of remaining utterly contemporary and winningly melodic. Past Bowie teammates are present and correct with contributions from Erdal Kizilcay and Earl Slick, while Reeves Gabrels lets loose on the riff-rocking saxophone freak-out Shopping For Girls. There's even an electro remake of Shaking All Over, the classic revived live by Tin Machine. The title track is cut from same musical DNA as Bowie's Motel, yet it's given a uniquely weird edge by pianist Morgan Fisher, and Lisa's cool, detached vocal. There are also moments of intoxicating intensity: the standout, CKSB, sees Ronson muse, slightly uneasily, "Hold my hand/Say something nice," in a naked paean to her lover. Only very seldom does one hear an album without a single dud. Dad would have been proud.

David Buckley

The Game

★★★

The Documentary 2/2.5

ENTERTAINMENT ONE/BLOOD MONEY. CD/DL/LP

West Coast gangsta rapper recovers lost mojo on two lengthy sequels to his big-selling 2005 debut.

The Game's debut *The Documentary* ushered in a new commercial era for West Coast hip hop. The Compton rapper watched others rise as intervening albums only thrilled in patches, his penchant for burning bridges over-shadowing an engaging talent for straight-up autobiography. Overseen by the resurgent Dr Dre, his team conjure similarly lush, atmospheric vintage soul and jazz backdrops to *Compton* and Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly*. It enables The Game to bring his murderous city of desperate deals and grisly gang battles into vivid life, his evident sincerity refreshing overly familiar themes. He also works hard to bring variety within the gargantuan two-and-a-half hour running time with an all-star guest list that could fill this entire review. It ensures the duds are few and far between.

Andy Cowan

Phil Cook

★★★★

Southland Mission

THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Gun for hire finally delivers his own stuff. Smokin'.

With specs bigger than Buddy Holly's and a wider grin, Phil Cook has been composer, writer and producer for everyone from The Blind Boys Of Alabama to Hiss Golden Messenger. Having been either hiding his light or honing it, he now turns out this gem, recorded in his adopted North Carolina hometown. It's a collaborative affair with local friends and players and has all the sweaty bonhomie of prime J.J. Cale or even Little Feat circa so-laid-back-it-was-supine Dixie Chicken; Cook even sounds like Lowell George. But this is his own thang, a down-home, funked-out, electrified Southern slide. Belong is a ditty made pretty with mandolin, Ain't It Sweet offers liquid Professor Longhair piano, and rowdy Sitting On A Fence Too Long – well, like the sweet soul girl chorus enquires, "What took you so damn long?" This is just the beginning.

Glyn Brown

Trevor Moss & Hannah-Lou

★★★★

Expatriot

THREE CROWS. CD/DL

Husband and wife folk duo make great leap forward.

This fourth album by fiercely DIY duo of Trevor and Hannah-Lou Moss may be deceptively simple but it's never simplistic. Sticking largely to their tested formula of acoustic guitars and Everlys-style close harmonies, the gentle production guidance of Ethan Johns has rounded out their sound nicely. Exactly what he's done is almost imperceptible – a barely audible bass here, the minuscule touch of reverb there, even some once-unthinkable strings on One And The Same – but it's buffed the duo to a sparkling finish without losing any of their charming directness. The title song shows a rare flash of anger, BBC 6Music favourite Up Mercatoria documents the bohemian area of St Leonards-On-Sea the peripatetic pair have recently called home (they spent the previous years living in their tour van/camper), but mostly *Expatriot* sheds any lingering quirkiness in favour of heads down, no nonsense, straight-talking folk'n'roll.

Andy Fyfe

In never rains but… Tortoise come out of shell.

The perfect disaster

Far from calamitous return to form for post-rock grandees. By David Sheppard.

Tortoise

★★★★

The Catastrophist

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

MILLIONS NOW Living Will Never Die, Tortoise's second album from 1996, remains the Chicago instrumental combo's wonderfully eclectic, art-rock-meets-electronica-meets-classical minimalism *chef-d'oeuvre*. While that notion preoccupies critics and fans, the band maintain a studied indifference to the idea of the album as albatross. That insouciance is, perhaps, responsible for Tortoise's ever more lateral evolution – toward transcendentally cinematic heights on 1998's *TNT*, but with an increasing lack of spark on 2001's *Standards*, 2004's *It's All Around You* and 2009's *Beacons Of Ancestorship*, all of which err toward a default setting of synthetic noodling drizzled over stentorian beats, with only the tellingly titled *The Brave And The Bold*, their 2006 covers collaboration with Will Oldham, letting some unconstrained light into proceedings.

The multi-instrumentalist quintet – Dan Bitney, John Herndon, Doug McCombs, John McEntire and Jeff Parker – began *The Catastrophist* in 2010 when the City of Chicago commissioned music to celebrate the metropolis's jazz and improvising communities. That might have been the green light for further musical navel gazing, and the opening title track and subsequent Ox Duke do little more than shuffle familiar Tortoise tropes: muscular drumming, needling bass, outré chord progressions, retro-futurist-toned keyboards… Things take a turn for the interesting on the subsequent Rock On, however; a curious, keyboard stab-punctuated reprise of the 1973 David Essex single, spiritedly emoted by U.S. Maple's Todd Rittman.

The paradigm shifts again on Shake Hands With Danger, which decorates implacable drums and diseased, metallic percussion with the kind of soaring yet wintry guitar lines that Carlos Alomar delivered on David Bowie's *Low*, while the ensuing The Clearing Hills is a disarmingly naïve Rhythm Ace drum machine, guitar and piano mooch that slowly evaporates into an ambient cloud. Meanwhile, the seductive Gesceap is an exercise in layered, time-changing Farfisa organs indebted to Philip Glass's *Music In Similar Motion* but transcending homage via its use of limber bass and drums, before building to a freak-out climax worthy of Ash Ra Tempel.

Elsewhere, Hot Coffee marries Bowie art-funk to Tom Verlaine guitar plangency, while Yonder Blue is, of all things, a heartstring-tugging, deep soul ballad delivered, with typically deadpan poignancy, by Yo La Tengo's Georgia Hubley through a shimmering gauze of processors.

Like much here, its mellifluous warmth is matched by the subtle inventiveness of the playing and the sheer detail in the production. It's not that Tortoise have got their groove back – they've never lacked compelling rhythm – rather, they've rediscovered their alchemical ability to conjure the atmospherically and melodically sublime from premium grade popular and art music precedents. Post-pop, anyone?

Spread the word: Gavin Clark had the voice of an angel that's been up all night.

Let us prey

An unhinged preacher grants afterlife to an unsung singer. By Jim Irvin.

Gavin Clark & Toydrum

★★★★

Evangelist

UNDERSCORE. CD/DL/LP

GAVIN CLARK, a prolific songwriter and beguiling vocalist whose work could fly – though mostly under the radar – died last February, aged 46. Clark's creative life began fairly late, picking up a guitar at 18 following the death of his father. He didn't discover his voice until his twenties, and always harboured anxiety about his gifts. Like his songs, he didn't sell himself, but let you find him.

He had a combative relationship with alcohol, which alcohol often won. It affected his creativity, his relationships and, eventually, his voice. The novelist John Niven, a former A&R man who signed Clark's first band Sunhouse to Go! Discs for one excellent album, *Crazy On The Weekend*, says: "He had the voice of an angel that's been up all night." Niven soon discovered how Clark's self-destructive urge governed his muse – Sunhouse had split by the time the album was released.

In 2007, Clark's close friend, director Shane Meadows, made a film about him. The Living Room is a touching, pathetic study – refreshing in its complete lack of romance – of Clark struggling in a Stoke-On-Trent semi, trying to record on cheap equipment while the kids are asleep, the neighbours aren't shouting or the bailiffs aren't knocking, a struggle compounded by those doubts. "Deep in the core of me I'm just a bit fucked up," he says, cheerfully.

After disbanding another group, folk trio Clayhill, Clark became a vocal contributor to cool collective UNKLE. In January 2011 he started collaborating with core members James Griffith and Pablo Clements on a loosely autobiographical concept, transposing a rock singer to a corrupted, doubt-ridden preacher. Newly relocated to Brighton, Clark was feeling optimistic and creative. But the demons weren't finished with him. UNKLE sputtered out, the sessions stalled and the pressures of Clark's complex personal life started to wear upon him. When Griffith and Clements resurfaced as Toydrum, work on *Evangelist* resumed, but Clark was in poor shape. After his death, from heart failure, Toydrum vowed to complete the proposed record using, in places, performances from Clark's bare writing demos.

The result is raw-nerved and darkly beautiful, sometimes joyful, sometimes harrowing, and works by seeping into the consciousness. Toydrum's loose-yet-tensile settings don't deify the singer but humanise him. Spirit assays a psychedelic swagger, Clark's voice sailing into gritty falsetto; Same Hands is a ragged, glam-dub prayer-call; Never Feel This Young a brooding episode of vulnerability; God Song an anxious sermon-cum-breakdown; Whirlwind Of Rubbish a moving, late-life daydream, somewhat reminiscent of the recent work of Bill Fay. And finally comes Holy Holy's closing moment of ambivalent exhalation.

Evangelist provides an apt, off-kilter coda for a troubled artist who, as he sings on its opening song, "created light from sweetness and darkness".

Evangelist

Matt Berry And The Maypoles

★★★

Live

ACID JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Live jams and old favourites from prog-leaning luvvie.

The only area that Matt Berry's bullish comedic roles share with his rich musical output is their quintessential Englishness, his records to date weaving a colourful tapestry from the various strands of Albion's indigenous music: acid folk, Canterbury scene prog and swinging '60s suss. Compiled from seven live shows, this collection suffers slightly from inconsistency – possibly because it's cut from several different shows. Opener The Innkeeper's Song certainly flies out of the traps in a whirl of psychbeat and precision prog, before So Low dips the energy levels. Nevertheless, backed by a band including Bluetones singer Mark Morriss and folk artist Cecilia Fage, and armed with a Korg synthesizer, Berry is daring and inventive. Sorry is an expected funk/reggae hybrid and stand-out track Solstice brilliantly evokes time-honoured seasonal rituals. Soon to 'retire' these songs, Berry's fans will surely be glad of the archive.

Ben Myers

Sunn 0)))

★★★

Kannon

SOUTHERN LORD. CD/DL/LP

The Seattle meta-metal duo descend again into rock's Marianas Trench.

Sunn 0))) remain today's most distinctive heavy-rock stylists – forsaking the mere ear-candy of rhythm and melody, what's left is just distortion and timbre humming across slo-mo riffs which seem to progress on a geological time scale. Such powerfully immersive "ambient metal" has attracted erudite collaborators, notably Scott Walker. But, next to 2014's Scott 0))) album *Soused*, this is a routine reiteration of the extraordinary. The familiar feel is accentuated by creakingly eerie vocals from a regular associate, Hungary's Attila Csihar, though the doom-metal plainsong on Kannon 2 does give a novel undertow. Sunn 0))) devotees will find satisfaction, but newcomers should start with 2009's igneous-rock classic *Monoliths & Dimensions* – a place where the rock riff has less to do with Smoke On The Water than a team of cowled monks shunting a giant stone from the entrance to a mystery sarcophagus.

Roy Wilkinson

Six Organs Of Admittance

★★★

Hexadic II

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Ben Chasny lets chance sway the course of his latest acoustic endeavour.

More restrained and contemplative than its predecessor, this second Six Organs full-length to be created under the auspices of Ben Chasny's own Hexadic compositional system replaces blistering electric blowouts with spacious bare bones quiet. Writing specifically for acoustic guitar, with both coincidence and the unique methodology of the Hexadic cards influencing his muse, Chasny transports himself to an occult-inclined space where brittle-picked folk meets baroque blues and more esoteric abstraction. Like delicately crafted offerings to a transcendent other, these enchanted meditations stir the air with spider-web strings and ghosted prayers, their understated spells growing stronger with each listen. If the phosphorus-hot psychedelia of the first *Hexadic* record was too much for some ears, this subtly chance-infused union of magick and method should prove more inviting.

Andrew Carden

Ethan Johns With The Black Eyed Dogs

★★★★

Silver Liner

THREE CROWS/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL. CD/DL/LP

Sometime Macca and Ryan Adams producer turns artist once again.

As the younger partner of the famed Johns production dynasty, Ethan Johns has certainly upheld the excellence of his father Glyn and late uncle Andy. One wonders, though, whether a need to further differentiate himself has driven his late-onset career on the other side of the console. *Silver Liner* is Johns' third album. Like 2014's *The Reckoning*, a concept album about an Englishman exploring frontier-era America, it largely fixes its gaze across the pond. The deliciously relaxed title track evokes Neil Young well over the herbaceous border, Juanita, with its Dylan-does-Tex-Mex feel, has Gillian Welch and sometime Flying Burrito Brother Bernie Leadon on backing vocals, and I Don't Mind, with Johns on mandolin and hurdy-gurdy, conjures The Travelling Wilburys at their most informal. Props, too, for the tremendous feel of each groove here. Johns and his Black Eyed Dogs shine throughout.

James McNair

ETHAN JOHNS
SILVER LINER
BLACK EYED DOGS

Time Is A Mountain

★★★★

II

REPEAT UNTIL DEATH. CD/DL/LP

Instrumentally engrossing second album from Swedish bass/drums/keyboard trio.

A whiter than white first impression – Terry Riley and Vangelis jamming with grace notes of John Carpenter – would seem to place Time Is A Mountain about as far to the other end of the Scandi-psych spectrum from Goat's joyous cod tribal Krautrock as you could possibly get. In fact, there is an unexpected Afro-beat overlap here in the form of not one but two tracks (the blissfully swirling opener Alicetti, the deceptively bucolic Cellowave) which explicitly reference William Onyeabor's recently refried Nigerian trance-pop landmark Atomic Bomb. Elsewhere, Andreas Werliin's driving drum patterns (Memento Mono, Auto-bo), Johan Berthling's fat bass (Sepian) and Tomas Hallonsten's twinkly keyboards (Outside Verona, Drumlings) take their turn in the spotlight with delicious decorum on an album whose strangely addictive take on the musical three-way will captivate Jimmy Giuffre 3 and Cream fans alike.

Ben Thompson

Shye Ben Tzur, Jonny Greenwood And The Rajasthan Express

★★★★

Junun

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

Qawwali-inspired, Israeli/Indian/Oxonian song, as also seen in movie of same name by Paul Thomas Anderson.

Jonny Greenwood discovered composer Shye Ben Tzur's Indian and Middle Eastern-derived music during a trip to Israel's Negev desert, and subsequently sought out the composer. Recorded at the lavish Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, *Junun*, meaning "the madness of love", is the resulting collaboration. Proffering an exotic, often rapturous reading of Tzur's Sufi-meets-Hebrew song forms, the first disc favours the brass, harmoniums and ecstatic vocalising of the local Rajasthan Express musicians overlaid with a subtle patina of electric guitar, ondes Martenot and electronics, all of it judiciously marshalled by producer Nigel Godrich – fans of Michael Brook's 1990s albums with qawwali legend Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan will relish much here. The second disc finds Greenwood more to the fore, notably on the drum machine-propelled Allah Elohim and the exquisitely quivering, flute and electronica ornamented There Are Birds In The Echo Chamber.

David Sheppard

Emilie & Ogden

★★★★

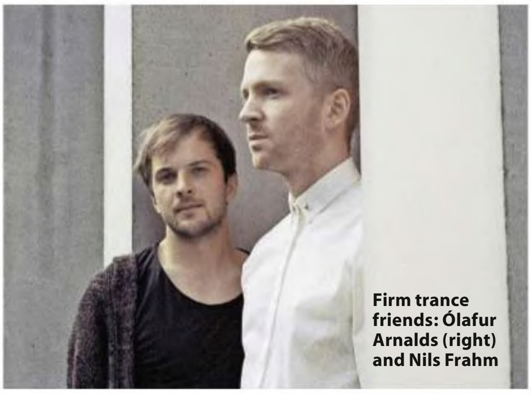
10,000

SECRET CITY. CD/DL/LP

From Montreal, Canada, Emilie Kahn and a harp named Ogden combine for enchanting debut.

Watching Barr Brothers harpist Sarah Page guest with her school choir unleashed Emilie Kahn's devotion to the instrument, though comparisons to Joanna Newsom are more frequently made. It's understandable, Kahn's saucer-eyed vocal pitch, over undulating harp, matches Newsom's early faery folk, but there are important differences: Kahn's songs are more succinct, averaging out at four minutes, her husky edges unlike Newsom's former mewling mannerisms, plus Kahn – who recently covered Taylor Swift's Style – applies modern R&B's contours to the likes of Go Home, White Lies and Hold Me Down, playing off the harp's soothing golden glow with harsher undertows. Kahn's capable of her own melodic rapture too – Long Gone and Dream are exquisite examples. So let's consider Emilie & Ogden a mesmerising 2.0 update rather than slavish copy.

Martin Aston



Firm trance friends: Ólafur Arnalds (right) and Nils Frahm

Tonje Thilesen

Lubomyr Melnyk

★★★★

Rivers And Streams

ERASED TAPES. CD/DL/LP

The beauty of a shimmering waterfall finds its solo piano counterpart.

With his "Continuous Piano" technique, the Ukrainian composer and pianist Lubomyr Melnyk plays constant arpeggios: each bleeds into the next. Astonishingly, his music – performed solo – sounds like two, three and even more pianos at once due to the overtones filling the spaces between the notes he actually plays. After realising his extraordinary music flowed like water, Melnyk hit upon basing a cycle of compositions around the theme of *Rivers And Streams*. Although the six pieces bear a familial relationship with minimalism, this is about the whole rather than a paring down: about the confluence of the consciously and intuitively heard. The impression is reinforced by subtle interjections of flute and guitar. An album of great beauty and quiet power, *Rivers And Streams* is all the evidence needed for Melnyk as both a master and a unique musical force.

Kieron Tyler

Ólafur Arnalds And Nils Frahm

★★★

Collaborative Works

ERASED TAPES. CD/DL

Double disc omnibus of Icelander Arnalds and Berlin-based Frahm's miscellaneous keyboard collaborations.

Fellow travellers in so-called 'post-classical' instrumental soundscaping, Arnalds and Frahm are firm friends who sporadically rendezvous to make spontaneous recordings, on pianos or synthesizers, as others might meet to enjoy a convivial meal. Everything on the first disc here has appeared before, on limited edition vinyl releases, but the music, which ranges from immersive, Eno-like ambient tone baths (A2) to melancholy-tinged, raindrop piano études (Life Story), is generally a cut above mere completists' fare. The second disc is given over to Trance Frendz, a series of improvisatory sketches that arose during a live video session, staged last July at Frahm's Berlin Studio. Diaphanously gentle piano duets and extemporisations for lambent synth or glinting glockenspiel are once again the meditative order of the day, their ad hoc nature underscored by the occasional rustling of microphone cables or disarming burst of laughter.

David Sheppard

UNDERGROUND

BY ANDREW MALE

Ian William Craig

★★★★★

Cradle For The Wanting

RECITAL. DL/LP

Eagerly anticipated follow-up to one of MOJO's Top 50 Albums of 2014.

FOR 2014's *A Turn Of Breath*, his debut release on Sean McCann's Recital label, classically-trained Canadian singer and composer Ian William Craig spent two years transforming layers of guitar, harmonium, found sounds, quarter-inch tape loops and his own lonesome falsetto into a shifting labyrinth of corroded rhapsodies, imbued with uncanny power. Recorded in Vancouver over two months last winter, with voice the only source laid to tape, *Cradle For The Wanting* is an ostensibly simpler yet no less stunning work. Unlike *A Turn Of Breath*, which played on ideas of sonic decay, *Cradle…* shimmers like something ghostly and eternal, ragged fragments of Craig's forlorn songs, that float, fade and transform into eerie polyphony, shellac-trapped arias and haunted gospel, like fading broadcasts from some spooked radio station out on the edge of space, that's been broadcasting since the dawn of recorded sound.

ALSO RELEASED

Rafael Anton Irisarri

★★★★

A Fragile Geography

ROOM 40. DL/LP

In spring 2014, while moving from Seattle to New York, producer Irisarri had his entire studio and possessions stolen. Signalling a fresh start, *A Fragile Geography* is an ambient drone work of unsettling sonic range, moving beyond milky melodic tropes into speaker-shaking choirs of black euphoria.

Geins't Naït/L. Petitgand

★★★

Oublier

ICI D'AILLEURS. CD/DL

In their second collaboration for Ici d'Ailleurs' Mind Travels series, French noise veterans Geins't Naït and esteemed film composer Petitgand find a luxuriant midpoint between Stephan Micus and Throbbing Gristle, calming spiritual melodies warped, reversed, and defaced by Serge Gainsbourg growl, jagged strings and screeching industrial aggro.

Møster

★★★★

When You Cut Into The Present

HUBRO. CD/DL/LP

From the always ace Hubro label, Kjetil Møster's third band album finds the Norwegian jazz reed adept taking his fellow seekers yet deeper into the cavernous mountain halls of heavy prog-jazz exultation, a vast blown-amp subterranea linked by a pulsing Ariadne's thread of dark righteous grooves.

Christopher Fox

★★★★

The Feeling Of Remembering

ERGODOS. CD/DL/LP

Solo cello works by the English composer Christopher Fox, based around ideas of recollection and forgetting. Cellist Anton Lukoszevieze replays remembered versions of a briefly sketched refrain, similar yet different, as aged voices, ancient instruments and folk melodies intrude, like a precious memory made strange by the years. *AM*

Dune roamin': Tinariwen's Ibrahim Ag Alhabib (right) delivers desert songs with Lalla Badi (centre).

Paris, Trance

Tuaregs dance away the heartache. By Andrew Perry.

Tinariwen

★★★★

Live In Paris: Oukis N'Asuf

WEDGE/PIAS. CD/DL/LP

IN THE late noughties, it really looked as if Tinariwen, dispossessed Tuareg freedom fighters-cum-bluesmen from the southern Sahara, might become full-blown Anglo-American rock stars. Reports of their electric-haired guiding light, Ibrahim Ag Alhabib, romping around Bamako with Led Zeppelin blaring from his 4x4 nominated him as the most viable 'world' poster-boy since Bob Marley.

Such a Faustian transaction definitely suited us better than it suited them. After cutting their second international album, 2004's *Amassakoul*, under French patronage, then 2006's *Aman Iman* with British producer Justin Adams, these inscrutable nomads recoiled from tainting ensuing records with too much Western influence.

When the simmering conflict between the Tuaregs in northern Mali and the south's government erupted into war in 2012, that all changed. The war's chief beneficiaries were Islamist militants, who briefly detained guitarist Abdallah Ag Lamida, and killed Ibrahim's 17-year-old son. Ag Alhabib mostly stayed put, but the rest of Tinariwen were forced back out into the world. Last year's *Emmaar* found them swapping the Sahara for California's Joshua Tree, lamenting their sense of displacement with redoubled vigour.

This live album's subtitle, *Oukis N'Asuf*, translates as "to overcome heartache" – specifically, a longing associated with separation from the desert. As an itinerant group, Tinariwen have certainly put in the hours on the transatlantic live circuit, but as *Live In Paris* shows, the band's tantalising flashes of electric-blues guitar-playing only accentuate how spiritually alien to Western rock they really are – and, for that, all the more valuable.

Captured last December at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, the climax of a 130-date world tour, Tinariwen chose this occasion to bring aboard Lalla Badi, Tamasheq culture's Vera Lynn, aged 75, as a thank-you for her taking them in during their '90s flight through Algeria.

And so their set opens with Badi incanting bitterly over what we knuckleheads might call a riff – delivered on Tindé, a goatskin-covered mortar drum, alongside one rhythmically hammered bass note – the same riff, repeated hard and heavy, over and over again for seven minutes. Never mind Led Zeppelin, are these cats hip to *Fun House*?

Topped off with groans, whoops, and throaty exhortations from the female backing posse, the mood in the room is instantly, audibly electric. There follows a selection of Tinariwen's most drivingly bluesy and immediate tunes, a fair portion drawn from *Emmaar*, interspersed with intense reiterations from Badi.

Yet, what we hear has no sense of a traditional live-album narrative, of a gig 'hotting up'. If anything, during the penultimate, brooding Emin Assosam, all the brouhaha dwindles, as this mesmerising group simply trance everyone out – including you at home – into an awestruck state of grace.

Neither a rival to Marley's *Live!* from 1975, nor, indeed, to Staff Benda Bilili and Songhoy Blues's Afro-rock showmanship, *Live In Paris* is a pure window into the troubled soul of the mid-2010s Tuareg.

Marry Waterson And David A. Jaycock

★★★★

Two Wolves

ONE LITTLE INDIAN. CD/DL/LP

Daughter of Lal Waterson collaborates with West Country acoustic-psych guitarist for LP number three.

Initially, the effect is somewhat spooky, such is the similarity of Marry Waterson's flinty dreamlike voice to that of her late mother's. On previous album collaborations – with brother Oliver Knight – the resemblance was even eerier, given Knight's writing partnership with Lal in the last four years of her life. However, when Knight took a sabbatical in 2013, Waterson hooked up with Cornish multi-instrumentalist David A. Jaycock. Waterson's best songs unfold like abstract short stories, connecting urban accounts of human sadness with eternal images of rich, wild nature, and while still bound to her family legacy – one song, Velvet Yeller, is built movingly around Mike Waterson's recording of Tam Lin – Jaycock's delicate arrangements light Waterson's tales with an enchanted pastoral glow, lifting them to somewhere truly beautiful, strange and unique.

Andrew Male

Wreckless Eric

★★★★

amERICa

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Nostalgia and adopted home fuel cult hero's first solo record in over a decade.

Newhaven's Wreckless Eric has resided in upstate New York since 2011, but his take on life in the country he now calls home is still very much rooted in the faded glamour and lost romanticism of the tatty seaside town he was born in. The 11 songs here, recorded in his kitchen, hallway, bedroom and stairwell on a rag bag of instruments – malfunctioning end-of-pier organs, synths, dodgy drum machines – are bruised and battered, but life affirming too. On Several Shades Of Green, over heavily strummed acoustic guitar and weird Joe Meek New World blips, he was, he sings, "nearly someone back in the day". On the warped, weary tour-bus blues of Transitory Thing, he yearns for his loved one's restorative smile. Heart-breaking, heartwarming, Eric's still very much a contender.

Lois Wilson

Olivier Heim

★★★★

A Different Life

OH RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

European son ups the ante on the first album under his own name.

Of all the Dutch-descended, Luxembourg-raised, Danish-schooled and Poland-based musicians out there, Heim is unquestionably the finest. Formerly of Warsaw's pop-tronic Très.b, Heim has quickly retired his alias, Anthony Chorale, under which he made tentative, folk-guided steps. *A Different Life* is more robust, but it retains a gorgeous shimmer, influenced, Heim says, by Kurt Vile and Connan Mockasin's electro-glide guitar. You can also hear Heim's teenage love of Marvin Gaye and The Delfonics, especially in the title track and Italy, which resembles a stripped-back, psych- and opus-free take on Tame Impala's current soul modernism. It's Getting Better, however, bridges Vini Reilly's Euro-sensibilities and the lush life of Afro-pop. The net result is one of the most gorgeous, simple and effortless fresh platters in recent times, its summery and autumnal hues arriving in perfect time for the encroaching winter blues.

Martin Aston

Paul Armfield

★★★

Found

PSA. CD/DL

Former bookstore manager writes companion record for vintage photo collection.

Armfield is one of those wily creatives operating outside the margins of mainstream enterprise. His bespoke songwriting service – biographical ballads, threnodies etc. diligently undertaken – has flourished, but *Found* is surely his most resonant notion yet. All but one of its poetic, folk, jazz and chanson-rooted songs draws inspiration from a different photo purchased at Berlin's flea markets, while opener Elinor's Eyes – Armfield's thank-you to the discerning friend who unearthed them – sets the scene. The arrangements, spare but bejewelled with strings, harmonium, harp, flugelhorn, dulcimer and more, have a sparky symbiosis with their paired images, each magnifying the other. From Tip To Filter, inspired by a woman smoking by a window, marks out a life in fag-ash, while Under The Linden, animating a little girl walking with her mother and grandmother, brings childhood memories full circle. A rich, deeply immersive experience.

James McNair

SHEER AGONY
MASTERPIECE

Sheer Agony

★★★

Masterpiece

COUPLE SKATE. CD/DL/LP

Canada's answer to The dB's.

From punk to The White Stripes, rejection of pop's prevailing aesthetic has proved a reliable motor for exciting music. So it is with these native Nova Scotians, who've reacted against Montreal's post-Arcade Fire slump into harder-heavier punkdom by indulging their enviable chops and songwriterly refinement for a take on rock fit to compare with its apotheosis in the pre-prog 1960s. Five years in the making, this humbly-titled debut certainly feels like compositional love has gone into its every chiming Big Star guitar riff, and twisty-turny Squeeze/Costello melodic phrase. *Masterpiece* can't readily be lumped in as an inept ol' indie-rock: Jackson MacIntosh's plummy tones on Anthony Ivy (speaking for the eponymous hero's wife) suggests an arch-er intent. Sheer Agony's powerpop catchiness wins through over time, hitting a thrilling peak on Debonaires, where MacIntosh and Christian Simmons enter a guitar tussle worthy of *Adventure*-era Television.

Andrew Perry

Corrina Repp

★★★★

The Pattern Of Electricity

DISCOLEXIQUE. CD/DL/LP

First solo album since 2006 from the otherwise prolific Oregonian.

A Marmite moment, maybe, where you'll love this or find it impossibly arch. I love it. Since Repp moved to Portland, the wild nature of Oregon has seeped into her bones; tracks conjure vast, brooding mountains and slow-moving clouds. Repp's first love was folk, then early jazz vocalists, and all these things are now distilled into echoing, other-worldly incantations. Instrumentation is spare, including what sounds like a bowed saw, while the voice is husky and dark. Opener The Beast Lives In The Same Place has the clarity and coolness of Laurie Anderson's Big Science; Pattern The Cuts makes repetitive classical interludes as moving as Penguin Café Orchestra's Perpetuum Mobile. Release Me is pared to the bone, tribal and quietly triumphant – "I'm gonna rise up… I'm rising" – while Long Shadow swoons against honeyed guitar. Audacious and brave.

Glyn Brown

new millennium
blues
lenny henry

Lenny Henry

★★★

New Millennium Blues

MADE IN SOHO. CD/DL

Gateway blues reveals propitious songwriting gift.

After conceiving Lenny Henry's Got The Blues, a programme for Sky Arts that attempted to answer why the UK produces so few black blues singers, the veteran comedian decided to have a go at singing himself. Recorded in London's Kore Studios with producer Chris Porter and a band led by Henry's pal Jakko Jakszyk, who's also a King Crimson guitarist and keyboardist, *New Millennium Blues* debuts a competent singer with a soulful voice. Covers of Muddy Waters, Little Walter and Jimmy Reed standards are well meaning but slick, and best suited to a local pub environment. His self-authored numbers, however, show promise – "If black lives matter how come the cops don't know," he sings on standout track The Cops Don't Know, a poignant plea for freedom and justice delivered over slide guitar and gospel-voiced backgrounds. More of that next time, please.

Lois Wilson

Khruangbin

★★★

The Universe Smiles Upon You

NIGHT TIME STORIES. CD/DL/LP

Intriguing Thai-influenced funk from rural Texas, naturally.

First properly heard in the UK in 2014 with their well-regarded A Calf Born In Winter EP, *The Universe Smiles Upon You* is the fascinating debut album from Khruangbin (meaning 'engine fly' in Thai). Khruangbin are three Texans influenced heavily by funk from Thailand; one lives in London, they rehearse via Skype, and they record in a barn in rural Texas. So far, so intriguing. Their soulfulness makes this all come alive, as well as the tremendous amount of air around their groove; you can imagine the wide plains two hours outside Houston as you listen to these mostly instrumental funk-surf-pop hybrids. The three vocal tracks have an otherworldly quality: languid confection White Gloves is particularly striking. On Zionsville, they sound like a sweetly swaying Meters meeting Mogwai. And to these ears, that is no bad thing at all.

Daryl Easlea

Sense memory

Inspired debut by a young New Zealand singer-songwriter you'll feel you've known forever. By Mike Barnes.

Nadia Reid

★★★★

Listen To Formation, Look For The Signs

SPUNK! CD/DL/LP

EVERY SO often a new musician comes along whose music is so of itself, that it feels wrong to trot out the usual 'sounds like' comparisons. And so it is with Nadia Reid, who seems to have slipped straight into such an emotionally rich and mature style that it both belies her age (23), and gives the listener the curious feeling that they have already been a fan of hers for years. But although there is a timeless feel about her music and one can detect a number of influences, this gem of an album is all about originality and new slants on old forms.

The most striking is Reid's wonderful voice. Whereas some musicians in this field can either over-complicate the vocal lines or adopt a mumbling, girlish approach in an attempt to denote 'emotion', Reid really sings out from the heart, inhabiting and exploring these cryptic, often melancholic songs with feeling but without affectation.

Track Of The Time is a slow, spartan song steeped in country blues in which her acoustic guitar – with its gutsy recorded sound and smart rhythmic articulation – is accompanied by double bass player Richie Pickard, sighing electric slide guitar from Sam Taylor and Joe McCallum's brushed drums. Reid delivers it imploringly through leaning on and then subtly bending the notes of the melody as she sings, "Every man will fall/Fall to his knees/For he has seen love burn/A fiery black disease."

Based in Port Chalmers near Dunedin on the South Island and brought up going to folk gigs, Reid says that she has derived a lot of inspiration from everyday observations and travelling, and for her the songs carry a strong sense of place. They are also cryptic but hint at a strong interior life, a sense that something pretty serious is going on just beneath the surface. "When I hit the ground in all my glory/I will know where I have come from," she sings on Runway.

"How many call themselves lovers when they are really creatures of the night?" she enquires on Just To Feel Alive, with sparse, sharp drum interjections and juddering Link Wray chords accompanying her acoustic guitar and a voice full of yearning. On Reaching Through, she appears energised by these crosscurrents, her voice soaring high over fuzz power chords and what sound like banks of strings, while on Holy Low the players make a rapt, sympathetic countryish accompaniment.

Ancestral folk forms seep into Call The Days. Musically it sounds as if it could have come from the Appalachians in the early 1900s, with bowed double bass and picked acoustic setting up a drone. Its distilled bittersweet sentiments of moving on and lost love are delivered with such poise that it's the perfect conclusion to a wonderful album.

Perfectly poised: Nadia Reid, from the heart.

Aimee Cane

Warm Brains

★★★

Big Wow

MILK MILK LEMONADE. CD/DL/LP/MC

Rory Attwell's post-Test-Icicular point of arrival.

Since his mid-'00s electro-noisenik-ing in Test Icicles, Attwell has gradually grown up, along a haphazard path through screechy femme-punks Kasms, Warm Brains' initial Pavement/Sebadoh alt rock, and a sideline as studio pedagogue (Palma Violets, The Vaccines, etc). His second outing as WBs – he near as dammit played everything on here – lands with a sense of graduation, as our hero finally delivers coherent out-and-out indie. Happy Accidents and White Monitor Screens echo Ride's chiming West Coast-tinged pop, while Bewildered strikes an agreeable Strokesy groove. Elsewhere, a trumpet blare (I Pedal Faster) and a female vocal partner (Now That I'm Boring) add depth, the sheen only sullied by Attwell's own school-of-Chris Difford foghorn voice. Lyrical references to a shrivelled tangerine in his fridge (Braising In The Sun) and "throwing my guts up in a Sydney airport toilet" (Brain Inside A Jar) suggest talk of his new-found maturity would be, well, premature. Happily so.

Andrew Perry

Josefin Öhrn + The Liberation

★★★

Horse Dance

ROCKET RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Enthralling debut from Swedish artist whose name translates as 'Eagle'.

The key track is You Have Arrived. A disembodied female voice sings the title line over and over again to a wobbly electronic pulse. An ominous one-finger keyboard melody suggests a headache-afflicted Bartók. Wherever this unspecified destination is, it is not one which suggests a good time for all on arrival.

Horse Dance, the debut album from Sweden's Josefin Öhrn + The Liberation, posits a psychedelic soundworld blanketed by an endless grey fog which occasionally clears to reveal its secrets. Although shrines to Harmonia, Neu!, Hawkwind, The United States Of America and Broadcast punctuate this landscape, Öhrn and her Liberation have also sought counsel with the inward voyagers of Bristolian trip-hop. The trump card is Öhrn: her second name translates as 'eagle', and fittingly, she soars over the thrilling *Horse Dance* with the suggestion of imminent danger. An enthralling album.

Kieron Tyler

Mo Kolours

★★★★

Texture Like Sun

ONE HANDED MUSIC. DL/LP

British-Mauritian Londoner's spiritual and soulful sampledelic quest.

Mo Kolours' 2014 debut saw its protagonist, Joseph Deenmamode, fêted for his channelling of Lee 'Scratch' Perry, ATCQ and Curtis Mayfield. Such comparisons could have weighed heavily on the young south Londoner for its successor. But while none of these 19 tracks reach four minutes, the music has an epic, quasi-devotional quality. Deenmamode's technique is a musical collage consisting of swirling loops, pillowy beats and his Marley-meets-Mos Def drawl. Accompanied by muted trumpets, handclaps and fidgety organ samples, the unfiltered house of Paradise inhabits the same locale as Moodymann; Harvest reimagines The Isley Brothers through the ears of the RZA, all scabrous percussion, while the title track sees The Stranglers' Golden Brown retooled with north African flavours and a stoned, asymmetrical rhythm. But it's the extraordinary alt-soul hymnal of Orphan's Lament – like Marvin Gaye produced by J Dilla – which holds a deep, emotional heft and the power to be Mo Kolours' lasting legacy.

Stephen Worthy

Tindersticks: still in perfect focus.

Richard Dumas

Tindersticks

★★★★

The Waiting Room

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Foyer pleasure: enduring arthouse band's filmic return.

For their tenth LP, Tindersticks gave the music to a selection of directors so they could make accompanying short films, smartly reversing the cliché about "music for a film that doesn't exist". Yet even without visuals, the follow-up to 2012's *The Something Rain* stands (inevitably) alone. Never just black and white, nor blatantly "cinematic", it operates in subtle shades of grey and sepia, flushing with urgent instrumental colour when the internal simmering becomes too much. Their line-up has shifted since their wonderful 1993 debut, but the foggy voice of Stuart Staples and an impeccable sense of drama remain central. Two duets – little dust-storm Hey Lucinda, with the late Lhasa De Sela, and We Are Dreamers, featuring Savages' reliably intense Jehnny Beth – extend their emotional reach, but the soulful, trouble-scenting flicker of Help Yourself, or the brassy subtleties of Second Chance Man, show a band still in perfect focus.

Victoria Segal

Soulsavers

★★★

Kubrick

SAN QUENTIN. CD/DL/LP

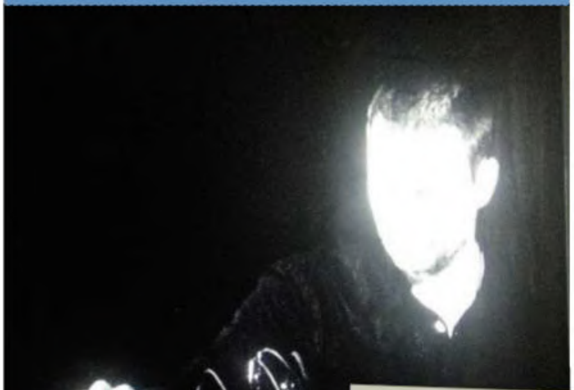
Production duo channel legendary director in orchestral form.

Soulsavers have worked with some illustrious voices over the past decade – including Will Oldham, Mark Lanegan and, most recently, Dave Gahan – but their latest muse isn't a musician. He's also been dead for 16 years. *Kubrick* is far removed from Rich Machin and Ian Glover's work with Gahan and co, which majored in widescreen, gospel and soul-dipped Americana. Instead it reimagines the movie auteur's best-known characters in symphonic form. Machin says *Kubrick* is less homage, more a channelling of the atmosphere and emotional impact the director created. On Dax, Kirk Douglas's character in the 1957 anti-war movie, Paths Of Glory, is portrayed in suitably mournful fashion, stirring strings rising above a melody picked out on acoustic guitar. DeLarge, from A Clockwork Orange, is celebrated with a gathering malevolence in keeping with its subject. Redolent of soundtrack ace Danny Elfman, if *Kubrick* is a pitch for work in cinema it's a sound move.

Stephen Worthy

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY



Prequel Tapes

★★★★

Inner Systems

R'COUP'D/NINJA TUNE. CD/DL/LP

Wintry, immersive, analogue electronica creates seductive atmosphere.

IN HIS youth, Prequel Tapes – real name unknown – would wander into the forest, take mushrooms and yearn to live in the British industrial cities, like Sheffield, where his electronic heroes dwelt. Brought up in Germany, his early musical dabblings referenced Teutonic techno, drone, industrial and ambient, all housed on a set of recordings long since forgotten. Until now. Rediscovered by their creator, they form the basis of this grand, cinematic album of organic, analogue electronica. Its roots twist around sensual ambient techno and hulking electro-classical opulence. Default pace is glacial, its pervading mood ethereal. The sweep of Untitled Memory and A4J8-D inhabit an industrial wasteland pummelled by heavy equipment and lit by powerful arc lights, but still possessing a fragile beauty; on Inner Systems classical piano cuts through the chattering rhythm and synth fog, like shafts of winter sunlight. It's a frozen world, but one

ALSO RELEASED

Acre

★★★

Better Strangers

TECTONIC RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Mancunian producer Acre's oppressive bass groove shuttles to and fro across the last two decades of UK urban music for its source material. *Better Strangers*' intense mechanoid rhythms and unfamiliar time signatures can make for uncomfortable listening, but snatches of melody are never far away, while the multi-textured approach on tracks like Automatic Fire are testimony to an innate inventiveness.

Herva

★★★

Kila

PLANET MU. DL/LP

Distancing himself away from mainstream dance music in the Tuscan countryside, Hervè Atsè Corti produces an idiosyncratic variant of techno and house. Frequently, its quirky, disjointed, machine-gun rhythms cut out – deliberately, momentarily – before being reinstated. It'll tie your internal organs in knots trying to dance to much of it, but its singularity also lends it charm.

André Bratten

★★★★

Gode

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND. CD/DL/LP

Through a combination of field recordings, tape machines, modified piano and strings, Norwegian sound designer André Bratten stitches together a cinematic, often mournful elegy documenting the travails of the rural working class of his homeland at the turn of the 20th century. Echoes of Aphex Twin, Nils Frahm, Arvo Pärt and Biosphere swirl around a deeply personal but sonically seductive piece of work.

Aris Kindt

★★★★

Floods

SCISSOR & THREAD. CD/DL/LP

Whether solo, or as Frank & Tony with Antony Naples, New Yorker Francis Harris has built a beautiful netherworld of dubby electronica and saturnine out-there house, producing results akin to a photographer smearing petroleum jelly on their lens. As Aris Kindt, a project with guitarist Gabe Hendrick, Harris and partner exhibit a penchant for drone and shoegazey rock, softened by pitter-patter beats and an enveloping, gauzy haze. *SW*

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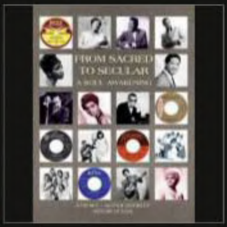

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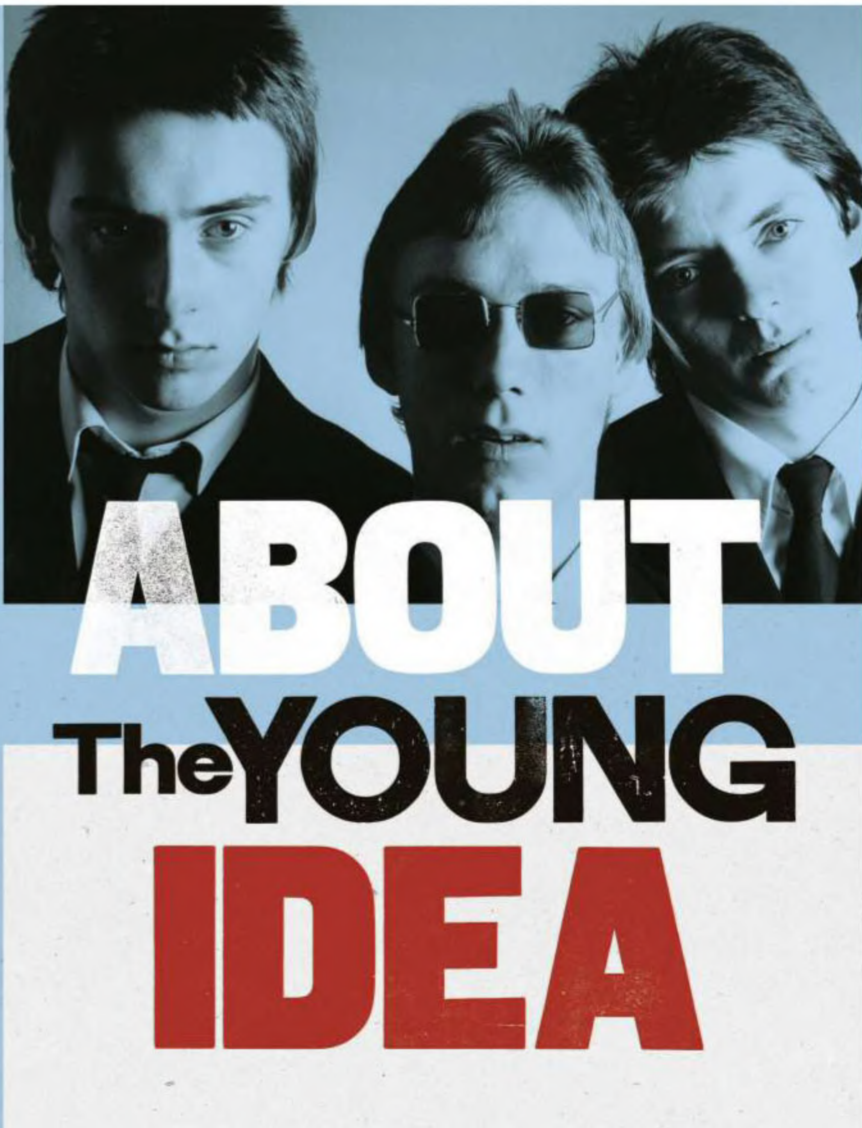
The JAM



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Tectonic tension: in the harsh world of Julia Kent.

Jacopo Benassi

Arwen Lewis

★★★

Arwen

OMAD. CD/DL/LP

Moby Grape's psychedelic songbook gets a country boost on family-affair debut.

This is charming audacity: a dozen late-'60s gems written and recorded by star-crossed San Francisco band Moby Grape, resurrected with authenticity in the guitars but sung with newly-discovered delight by a young modern-country woman. Arwen Lewis comes naturally to the Fillmore-Nashville crosscurrents in Fall On You and It's A Beautiful Day Today – her father is Grape singer-guitarist Peter Lewis, and he is fully present here on jangle and harmonies. But Arwen is robust and poised in the sunny charge of Come In The Morning and at her own best – sensual and wondering – in the balladry, particularly Peter's spectral He from 1968's *Wow*. This album is no replacement for the original trips – 1967's *Moby Grape* is a truly perfect record – but Arwen Lewis's debut, through homage, affirms the Great American Songbook that always lurked inside the Grape's all-American psychedelia.

David Fricke

The Magnetic Mind

★★★★

…Is Thinking About It

ROWED OUT. CD/DL/LP

Fantastical debut from the neo psych vanguard.

The Magnetic Mind don't care much for their own time, instead losing themselves in nuggets from the Golden State, their singer Ellie Foden channelling Grace Slick and The Vejtables' Jan Errico while her band draw on the best of the '60s underground – sunshine harmonies, modal melodies, improv organ solos, distorted guitars and lots of reverb. Their debut is a fuzz-for-freaks fantasy, and one so well constructed that climbing through the looking glass is the only option. Recorded by bassist and songwriter Paul Milne at the five-piece's rehearsal room in Finsbury Park, it really could be a lost album from the psych era. Highpoints: Maybe The Stars, Maybe The Sun, a delicious keyboard-led groove with cascading harmonies that's part Brian Auger Trinity, part Shocking Blue; and When The Morning Comes, an edifying balance of heavy soul and progressive rock.

Lois Wilson

Ashley Monroe

★★★★

The Blade

WARNER BROS. CD/DL/LP

Third solo album from the former Jack White back-up singer and member of the Pistol Annies super-trio.

When Monroe sings "You caught it by the handle and I caught it by the blade" on the title song – the only one here that she didn't have a hand in writing – you might think she was casting herself as the perpetual loser. Nothing of the kind. On the final track, traditional country waltz I'm Good At Leavin', she closes the door on a reject lover, claiming: "I've always been a rolling stone." She has a right to such pride, because the album, produced by Vince Gill and Justin Niebank, delivers on every level, displaying a Muscle Shoals toughness on the opening On To Something Good, a touch of heartbreak with Bombshell and a scintillating barroom romp, Winning Streak, that sounds for all the world like Dolly Parton backed by Jerry Lee Lewis. Diverse yet cohesive.

Fred Dellar

Julia Kent

★★★★

Asperities

LEAF. CD/DL/LP

Darkly evocative strings and electronica essays from Canada.

The noun "asperity" means, among other things, harshness, and on her fourth solo album, British Columbian Julia Kent explores this notion in both emotional and analogous geological terms ("an asperity is some part of a fault line that doesn't move, which can create an earthquake," she reveals in accompanying notes). While the album's nine, wordless pieces for mournfully beautiful cello and shifting ambient atmospheres may not always conjure seismic volatility, there is certainly an underlying tension close to the surface of swooning opener Hellebore, while the sonorously bowed bass strings and organ drones of Lac Des Arcs evoke endless oceanic depths and Empty States navigates the fine line between melancholy beauty and fractured, tectonic portent, like a throw-down between Gavin Bryars and Philip Jeck. As with much here, it serves to remind that Kent also plies her trade as a haunting soundtrack artist.

David Sheppard

Teeth Of The Sea

★★★★

Highly Deadly Black Tarantula

ROCKET RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album of compelling instrumental machine music.

Some of this London-based quartet were in a tribute band called Proxy Music. Alongside a name as good as Teeth Of The Sea this indicates both fun and a gift for musical nomenclature. But, while wit resides in track titles like Animal Manservant, this is a serious, authoritative record. Opener All My Venom is synth rumble with a mariachi undertow, like Leftfield straying onto the set of a Sergio Leone film. Animal Manservant hints at Aaron Copland's Fanfare For The Common Man, as adapted by Emerson, Lake & Palmer, but there are also synth screams suggestive of the Alien films. A filmic atmosphere is constant – a sense of spooked exhilaration fit to soundtrack the next Scandinavian crime series.

Roy Wilkinson

Bill Wells & Friends

★★★★

Nursery Rhymes

KARAOKE KALK. CD/DL/LP

Scots pianist-jazzateer's offbeat covers project. Guest stars proliferate.

"If people thought it was a bit strange, they didn't say," ventures Bill Wells, who persuaded a combination of Scottish and New York luminaries to help give 15 nursery rhymes – dark, kooky, endearing – unpredictable new homes. So, Yo La Tengo team with Norman Blake on Lavender's Blue, and Karen Mantler on Three Blind Mice, both lithe groovers, though otherwise subdued, late-night settings dominate. Annette Peacock's Hey Diddle Diddle gently smoulders, Bridget St John makes animal torture sound comforting on Ding Dong Bell, rootsy chanteuse Amy Allison's Shoo Fly is a gothic lullaby, while she shares Polly Put The Kettle On with Isobel Campbell, who in turn croons, Chris Connor-style, through Rock A Bye Baby. If the pace and mood start to become a tad predictable, Satomi 'Deerhoof' Matsuzaki's Twinkle Twinkle Little Star is more of a spectral journey into a far stranger world.

Martin Aston

Fuzz

★★★★

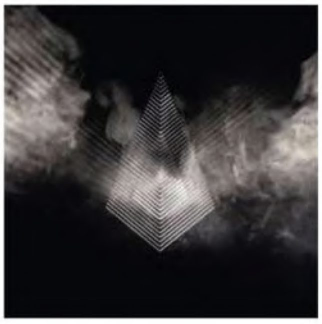
II

IN THE RED. CD/DL/LP

Second sortie for Ty Segall's eminently heavy sludge-rock trio.

Another day, another side-project for the remarkably prolific Ty Segall, this time a second album for the trio he fronts with regular cohort Charles Moothart. Segall drums and sings alongside vocalist/guitarist Moothart, locating a rich seam of molten psychedelic heaviness pitched between Black Sabbath and Blue Cheer. It's a brawny beast – Pollinate ploughs like an rusty axe and is shot through with acid-fried whammy-bar freakouts; Pipe is a slow-moving monster – but there's also an elegant grace to *II*'s bruising riffage, not least when Segall channels Marc Bolan's pixie wail on the floor-quaking of Jack The Maggot. But the dominant flavour is a gleeful heaviosity that should charm fans of early QOTSA and, of course, Sabbath: Moothart's nasal snarl is often eerily Ozzyesque, while pocket-epic Burning Wreath harbours marvellous skronk-outs where one detects the unmistakable influence of Iommi's nine-and-a-half fingers on the fretwork.

Stevie Chick



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Oren Ambarchi & Johan Berthling

★★★

Tongue Tied

HÄPNA. **DL/LP+CD**

Abstract guitarist/drummer Ambarchi and bassist Berthling reunite for suspended harmonics and warm pizzicato tones that suggest Popol Vuh and Ray Brown scoring endless bright winter mornings. *AM*

Black Breath

★★★★

Slaves Beyond Death

SOUTHERN LORD. **CD/DL/LP**

Caring nothing for genre purists, with album three the Seattle quintet cook up a debilitating thrash/death/doom speedball, with nods to mid-'70s BÖC and buoyed by Neil McAdams' new crusty Celtic Frost-style vocals. *AM*

Blitzen Trapper

★★★

All Across This Land

LOJINX. **CD/DL/LP**

Oregon quintet and previous genre-skippers' eighth LP settles into a classic rock groove. Occasionally adopting Black Crowes' Poundshop Stones swagger, thick country blues vocals rein in any indulgent rock-outs. *TB*

Cage The Elephant

★★★★

Tell Me I'm Pretty

COLUMBIA. **CD/DL/LP**

With Black Keys' Dan Auerbach producing, Kentucky's CTE have added trippy pop to their straightahead rock approach. It's a welcome upgrade, more considered yet catchier. *PS*

Correatown

★★★

Embrace The Fuzzy Unknown

HIGHLINE. **CD/DL**

Written during a period of flux that saw Angela Correa marry and have her first child, a sense of ecstatic confusion rings through her pure-tone, looped voice on songs like the Julia Holterish Bonfires. *JB*

Fufanu

★★★★

Few More Days To Go

ONE LITTLE INDIAN. **CD/DL/LP**

Icelandic duo reflect their homeland's long winter nights rather than its famed glacial or pixie-ish side, although the woozy Ballerina In The Rain adds an element of whimsy to their swirling post-rock. *PS*

Joe Gideon

★★★

Versa Vice

BRONZE RAT. **CD/DL/LP**

Gideon illuminates any shadow evident on former band, sibling duo Joe Gideon And The Shark. This is a raw, dark rock debut, recorded with with Bad Seeds drummer Jim Sclavunos, and telling an intensely spirited story. *TB*

Huw M

★★★

Utica

I KA CHING. **CD/DL/LP**

Welsh composer Huw M releases an ethereally exposed third album. A combination of English and his mother tongue, Cardiff's Marshall Sisters help him create a bilingual, lushly textured Welsh folk. *TB*

Lizzo

★★★★

Big Grrrl Small World

BGSW. **CD/DL**

Justin Vernon's vocoder gets its first outing since Kanye at Glastonbury on Bother Me's woozy, underwater R&B. If that leans towards hip hop Enya, the rest is persuasive R&B with strident lyrics and sharp sonics. Hello, Missy fans. *JB*

Keith Rowe/ John Tilbury

★★★★

Enough Still Not To Know

SOFA 4. **CD/DL**

Three hours of glacial guitar and piano improvs from the Cornelius Cardew/AMM duo. Their scratches, rumbles and silences have an eerie pull. *AM*

Ben Seretan

★★★

Ben Seretan

LOVEBOAT RECORDS & BUTTONS. **CD/DL**

Raised on SoCal post-punk and now based in NYC, Seretan channels the adroit noisecraft of Sonic Youth, cosmic jazz and Neil Young's dexterous guitar wrangling on strong, melodic LP. Sometimes meandering, always deeply felt. *JB*

Slobber Pup

★★★★

Pole Axe

RARE NOISE. **CD/DL/LP**

The blasting improv trio of US pianist Jamie Saft, free guitar pro Joe Morris and Hungarian power drummer Balazs Pandi are joined by Swedish sax colossus Mats-Olof Gustafsson for 50 minutes of spiritual jazz entropy and revelation. *AM*

Smoke Fairies

★★★★

Wild Winter

FULL TIME HOBBY. **CD/DL/LP**

Christmas LP alert! Katherine Blamire and Jessica Davies's festivities are wintery songs chilled by reverby yearning; strange and lovely. Amid Beefheart and Handsome Family covers, their Three Kings go groovy stargazing. *JB*

Le Volume Courbe

★★★

I Wish Dee Dee Ramone Was Here With Me

PICKPOCKET. **CD/DL/LP**

Charlotte Marionneau's group imagine hanging with the late Ramone by the pool. Hypnotic pop-naïf; funny too. *JB*

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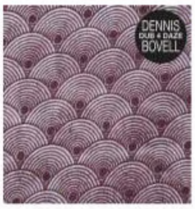
The Arcs vs. The Inventors, Vol. 1

Led by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, The Arcs made their debut in August with the sublime *Yours, Dreamily,*: an album drawn from eight years of material written with members of the Keys' touring band who complete The Arcs line-up. *Yours, Dreamily,*'s atmospheric road-map of America – soul, Mariachi, blues, soft psych, gospel – is given an extra twist on this first EP of collaborations with US musical "heroes" whom Auerbach vows to "continue to track down and bug". Here, Los Lobos's David Hidalgo and Dr. John add suitably moody Latin and gris-gris touches, mostly notably on the intoxicating Virginia Slim and beautifully dreamy Janitor. Available as a Record Store Day 10-inch, then streaming from December 11. *PG*

Silhouettes



Dennis Bovell

Eye Water

From a new LP of Bovell dubs, a bouncy, rhythmic reconstruction of Rain Drops, lovelorn roots from 1977 that now features Dennis's impersonation of a trimphone. (SoundCloud)

Brian Setzer

Rockin' Rudolph

Belting rockabilly Christmas album from the former Stray Cat. The festive Flintstones' Yabba Dabba Yuletide is a highlight, naturally, but the whole album is on Yahoo. (Briansetzer.com)

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MOJO STORE OF THE MONTH

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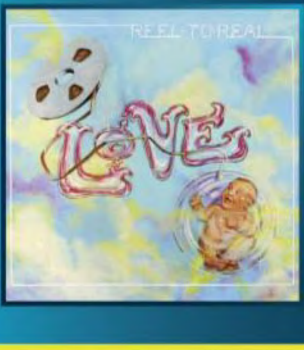

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STEVE JANSEN & RICHARD BARBIERI
STONE TO FLESH

Stone to Flesh
Steve Jansen
Richard Barbieri

Kscope release a brand new edition of Steve Jansen & Richard Barbieri's 1995 album 'Stone To Flesh' with a bonus new studio recording entitled 'Map Of Falling'. The album takes in elements of epic art rock and ambient atmospherics creating a diverse collection of pieces that vary from the dynamic to the hauntingly meditative. It features a guest performance from Porcupine Tree's Steven Wilson.
KSCOPE

JACK BRUCE
MORE JACK THAN BLUES

hr BIG BAND
CD+DVD
JACK BRUCE
More Jack Than Blues
FSK 0

Reissue of a highly acclaimed 2006 concert which saw legendary Cream bassist, vocalist and composer Jack Bruce join forces with the hr-Bigband. He presents classic Cream songs and other landmarks of his career, in gripping new arrangements. Included is a previously unreleased DVD of the concert, featuring two additional tracks.
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Taking the plunge

How Bruce strove to make learning fun on his 1980 double album. Now 4-CDs, a documentary, two live DVDs and a book, all in a box set. **Phil Sutcliffe** dives in.

Bruce Springsteen

★★★★

The Ties That Bind: The River Collection

COLUMBIA. CD+DVD

Springsteen, as executive producer, chooses an oddly comic moment to open the making-of DVD. He's in close-up and he's lost track. "What were you getting at there, Thom? (*Director Zimny mutters reply*) Oh, the creative life not being enough, yeah…" Yeah. Bit of a problem when it's all you've got…

Back in '79-80, his life on a $700-a-month rented farm in Holmdel, New Jersey comprised writing, rehearsing… and that was it. Still, pursuing that insufficiency, creative work, he groped around "imperfect ideas of how people connect and relate to one another or don't", knowing this very imperfection was what he craved for his own life. So via *The River* he tried to prepare himself to "jump in with both feet" – jump into enduring love, and jump into a more socially aware style of writing to reflect his recent self-education in American history and literature (while also restoring the beloved E Street bar band on-stage thrill to their records).

The box set joy is the archive additions, their whiff of ancient, wasted sweat. (Studio scenes can be found on the live DVDs, unavailable for review.) Well, the outtakes CD of 22 tracks, half previously unreleased, is no disgrace. But it does reveal the difficulty they dragged themselves through: namely, stodge. Songs/tracks that never kicked their work boots off and put on their dancing shoes. Eight of them, for this reviewer, including Night Fire, Whitetown, Dollhouse, Mary Lou. The lyrics are fine, solid Springsteen rough comedy and street drama. But the music feels like someone else's party, effort rarely catching up with fun.

Retro inspiration occasionally rewarded their striving. From Small Things (Big Things One Day Come) has a Chuck Berryish sharpness, The Time That Never Was a high Orbisonian fervour, and Living On The Edge Of The World a Ramones-meet-Beach Boys exhilaration. Quality rejects. And then you can see that album planning might take out a strong song like Stray Bullet because its theme overlaps Point Blank. As to Roulette, Springsteen's raging political onslaught post-Three Mile Island meltdown, in the doc Springsteen now calls its omission "the big oversight".

Creeping towards the actual album, next exhibit is the 10-track variant Springsteen delivered to Columbia in 1979, then prudently withdrew. The Ties That Bind, Hungry Heart, The River and I Wanna Marry You made it through unchanged. But Stolen Car shows up slightly diminished by a fuller arrangement and Springsteen's failure to see how much he needs "But I ride by night and I travel in fear/That in this darkness I might just disappear" to be the closing couplet. The Price You Pay, similarly, has a verse it later lost (too moralistic?). However, the 20-flight-rocking You Can Look (But You Better Not Touch) has so much more life than the *River* version its replacement is a surprise.

As to the three all-new songs, the piano melodrama Be True wears thin its overused movie metaphor, while Cindy is cute and slight, and Loose Ends sports the E Street big sound with a stately Clarence Clemons solo, but lost out to more powerful accounts of Springsteen's then favourite story about relational perversity: "Then little by little we choked out all the life that our love could hold…"

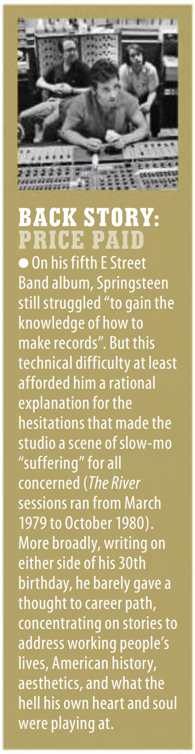
Ah, finally, *The River*… With the partying problem unresolved, would-be-whoop-it-up stodginess abounds in Out On The Street, Crush On You, I'm A Rocker… even future on-stage favourites Cadillac Ranch, Ramrod and Sherry Darling (despite ace sitcom lyrics: "Your mama's yappin' in the back seat/Tell her to push over and move them big feet"). Mercifully, Hungry Heart and Two Hearts proved he/they hadn't lost Saturday night forever. Levitational from the first Springsteen-special "Yeah!", Hungry Heart exults in deadly, life-wrecking one-liners: "I went out for a ride and I never went back… We fell in love, I knew it had to end". And Two Hearts, while an ecstatic surge of romance, has the narrator urging his buddies/himself to "become a man and grow up to dream again". That line touches the essence of all the great tracks: Independence Day, Wreck On The Highway, Point Blank, Fade Away and more. Adulthood. How to hold down a job, stick with a love – not run away.

Even then, degrees of strenuousness overtake Jackson Cage and The Price You Pay. But the title track faces it all down, though painfully: sex and love, the accidental baby trap, losing the job your lives depend on, and the big question arising, "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true?"

The mighty E Street Band plays these songs so delicately, holding their emotions like wounded birds, and Springsteen sings them with deep, desperate empathy. Just listen to that overwhelming 25 seconds towards the end of Drive All Night, raw roaring "heart and soul", ripped from his innards. Or the working man's existential horror he embodies in Fade Away's vision of a man "left to vanish into the night". That's the Stolen Car driver's loss of self, the "fear that in this darkness I will disappear".

The documentary interviews may imply those tracks worked because they were personal – and maybe the party tracks bombed because Springsteen just didn't have a party in him at the time. He says he asked himself how "I make the connections that I'm very frightened of, but I feel like if I don't make I'm going to disappear or get lost… a creative life, an imagined life, is not a life… [Wreck On The Highway] ended up closing the record… love and death, life and death… you know, time, limited amount of time that you have… It felt right, it felt right."

Eventually.



BACK STORY: PRICE PAID

- On his fifth E Street Band album, Springsteen still struggled "to gain the knowledge of how to make records". But this technical difficulty at least afforded him a rational explanation for the hesitations that made the studio a scene of slow-mo "suffering" for all concerned (*The River* sessions ran from March 1979 to October 1980). More broadly, writing on either side of his 30th birthday, he barely gave a thought to career path, concentrating on stories to address working people's lives, American history, aesthetics, and what the hell his own heart and soul were playing at.

KEY TRACKS

- Hungry Heart
- The River
- Stolen Car

> "THE E STREET BAND PLAYS SO DELICATELY AS SPRINGSTEEN SINGS WITH DEEP, DESPERATE EMPATHY."

Bard of the Boardwalk: Bruce Springsteen in Asbury Park, NJ, 1980. "I went out for a ride and I never went back."

FILTER REISSUES

Ride

★★★★

Nowhere 25

CREATION. CD+DVD/DL/LP

Twenty-five years on, the album that launched a thousand T-shirts gets the slinky reissue treatment.

Shoegaze was always a silly word, and inaccurate too, when applied to its supposed forebears Ride, a band whose gorgeous, pulverising sound had its musicians with their heads thrust back in sonic ecstasy. Ride's 1990 Creation debut, *Nowhere*, remains the group's greatest achievement, and this 25th anniversary reissue marks it simply as one of the best albums of the past quarter-century. From the clangy, quickfire psychedelia of Kaleidoscope to the golden, magical lull of Vapour Trail, *Nowhere* established each of Ride's members as invaluable. Its songs are driven by a sparking, kinetic energy, evident in the accompanying Nowhere 25 live DVD, which features previously unseen footage from a London gig in 1991. This reissue tacks on tracks from Ride's Fall and Today Forever EPs – nice perks, though the album's original eight songs are really all you need.

Sophie Harris

The Comsat Angels

★★★★

Waiting For A Miracle

EDSEL. CD/LP

Post-punk's band-most-likely-to given the reissue treatment.

Film critic Mark Kermode claims The Comsat Angels "were the band that Joy Division could have been", a statement indicative of the fervour of their most partisan fans. Here is another chance at re-evaluation as this their 1980 debut, *Sleep No More* ('81) and *Fiction* ('82) – all full of extras – are all excellent. The band work well with space, with the powerful Mik Glaisher dishing out the big beat with endless subtle syncopated variations. Stephen Fellows is a fine singer and an incisive guitarist and Andy Peake delivers minimal '60s garage band organ hooks, ominous synth drones and shadowy, Ubu-esque electronic currents. All these elements coerce on Independence Day, an epic pop song boosted by Kevin Bacon's massive fuzz bass. They should have been major contenders as they ticked all the boxes – except, crucially, the one labelled 'image'.

Mike Barnes

THE COMSAT ANGELS

J Dilla

★★★★

Dillatronic

VINTAGE VIBES/MA DUKES. CD/DL/LP

Collection of synth-heavy unreleased instrumentals from late great hip hop producer.

Since his shock death in 2006, J Dilla's impact has mushroomed. An entire wave of artists (Flying Lotus, Hudson Mohawke, even Kanye West) has emerged replicating his disorienting take on golden era boom-bap, not least his penchant for digging out and twisting micro-samples while cannily subverting more obvious sources. Whether working as a hitman-for-hire for Common, A Tribe Called Quest and Janet Jackson, or across more slippery solo endeavours, the master sonic manipulator became doubly prolific as he battled furiously against Lupus-spurred blood disease TTP. Compiled by close studio allies DJs Alien Villainz from a reputedly still ample vault, these 41 short, snappy but entirely involving instrumentals generously reaffirm Dilla's inimitable way around chopped-up vocal samples, waspish, distempered synth lines and spacey unquantised drums.

Andy Cowan

WETHE
TASITO
QUELEUARS

He has it covered: famed Senegalese sleeve designer Djibathien Sambou.

John Coltrane

★★★★

A Love Supreme – The Complete Masters

IMPULSE!/UME. CD/DL

Coltrane's magnum opus expanded to three discs.

If John Coltrane hadn't braved cold turkey and kicked his heroin addiction in 1957, he probably would have been dead by the time 1964 arrived. That was the year he recorded this, his most iconic album, in whose liner-notes the saxophonist recalled the religious epiphany that prompted his resolve to abstain from drink and drugs and initiated his creative rebirth: "I experienced by the grace of God, a spiritual awakening which was to lead me to a richer, fuller, more productive life." In essence a four-part musical acknowledgement of gratitude to his creator, *A Love Supreme* has become one of the few jazz albums to gain universal acceptance. This elongated 50th anniversary edition includes nine previously unissued takes and a complete live version of the album, vividly bringing to life the creative process behind the birth of Coltrane's timeless masterpiece.

Charles Waring

Irmin Schmidt

★★★

Electro Violet

MUTE. CD

Twelve-CD box set covering the former Can keyboardist's soundtrack work and 34-year solo career.

It was always difficult to get a handle on Irmin Schmidt even in Can: the Stockhausen pupil, conductor and concert pianist, who had moved over to rock and who could make a fearsome din or not play at all if appropriate. And so this box set is full of surprises. The rather forbidding Gormenghast opera is a world away from *Impossible Holidays*, on which Schmidt sings over some Can-like exotica in his genial, bemused-sounding voice. Zombie Mama, meanwhile, sounds like Ralf Hutter meets Dr. John. One of the most consistent albums is *Masters Of Confusion* (2001), a dazzling mixture of lyrical piano, electronics and breakbeats, recorded with Kumo. Schmidt's film music, with a hitherto unreleased disc of material here, veers from slow electronic currents to Bach-like organ fantasias, to melodic chamber music – in fact, all these approaches are found on a single composition, the appropriately titled Enigmatikman.

Mike Barnes

Simple Minds

★★★

Once Upon A Time

VIRGIN UNIVERSAL. CD+DVD/DL/LP

Remastered 5-CD and DVD box autopsy on the group's 1985 double-million seller.

Maybe this is what happens when you tour the euphoric *Sparkle In The Rain* across the US and watch it fall flat. Coveting U2-scale success, yet without linchpin bassist Derek Forbes, Jim Kerr stopped singing about storms, shipyards and Scotland, and shoulder-padded his band's new clean sound with a Jimmy Iovine and Bob Clearmountain production, demoted Charlie Burchill's guitar, and doubling choral belt with Chic/*Young Americans* vocalist Robin Clark. There are no lost demos here, just successive remixes of Alive And Kicking and Don't You (Forget About Me) across two CDs, plus hard-slog 1987 concert LP *Live In The City of Light*. Remastered to Windolene shininess, Kerr's headlong love songs to Chrissie Hynde now sound cyclical, questioning and sad, adrift in *Once Upon A Time*'s vast, echoing halls like Charles Foster Kane in Xanadu; a man at the peak of his success, isolated and alone.

Andrew Male

Various

★★★★

Senegal 70

ANALOG AFRICA. CD/DL/LP

Rare and previously unreleased tracks from the golden age of mbalax.

Senegalese mbalax fused Cuban son, New Orleans soul and jazz elements with local polyrhythms, an exceptional mixture that emerged in Dakar in the '60s, and was further refined in the '70s, with added of funk. This stellar compilation has a dozen nuggets, five of them brought to light by Teranga Beat's Adamantios Kafetzis, who unearthed them from original master tapes, recorded at the Sangomar nightclub in Thiès. We are thus treated to Orchestra Baobab's delightful Thiely, delivered in garbled Spanish, and a highly plausible take of El Carretero, performed with verve by Amara Toure and the famed Star Band. Orchestre Laye Thiam's Kokorico is leftfield funk in English, and Le Tropical Jazz mutate Arsenio Rodriguez's Kiko Medina to fine effect. No weak tracks, 44-page booklet, highly recommended.

David Katz

Sonic prefab: Lush (from left) Miki Berenyi, Phil King, Emma Anderson, Chris Acland.

Gaze of our lives

Reactivated shoegazing cell's career compiled. By Victoria Segal.

Lush

★★★★

Chorus

4AD. CD/DL/LP

UNLIKE THE other blissed-out boys and girls of the shoegazing scene, Lush always knew how to look their audience in the eye. While their fringed contemporaries were going blank again and again, the quartet, headed by school friends Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson had plenty of side to them. They came from a fanzine-writing, Siouxsie & The Banshees-loving past, undoubtedly besotted with the Cocteau Twins' cloud-pictures but still tethered to the earthier qualities of duffel-coated indie and punk. (It's telling that they recorded Zounds' Demystification, included on this five-disc box, as a B-side; even more notable that Wire's Colin Newman, recently picking his Top 10 Wire covers, chose Lush's versions of Mannequin and Outdoor Miner, also here, as his two favourites.)

This collection, featuring two compilations (1990's *Gala* and 1996's *Topolino*) alongside the band's three studio albums, shows a band more flexible and multifaceted than shoegazing legend suggests. Their snappy shift into Britpop with 1996's *Lovelife* might have been controversial at the time – the girl-group shimmy of 500 (Shake Baby Shake) and Ladykillers anything but celestial, the presence of Jarvis Cocker on duet Ciao! as much a badge of its time as a pair of Gola trainers – but, in retrospect, Lush always had a surprising directness. Even *Gala*, the compilation including their mini-album Scar and EP Mad Love from their shoegazing pomp, is full of spikes and edges. Sweetness And Light and Thoughtforms have all the requisite jangle and blur but there's a sharpness, a watchfulness to the vocals, while De-Luxe remains one of the era's most filthily bed-headed songs, a playmate for My Bloody Valentine's Blown A Wish.

This lack of authentically spectral mystique might have worked against them slightly – Anderson believes they were judged less on their music than their busy social lives – but it resulted in their own muscular take on the ethereal. Their coolly received proper debut, 1992's Robin Guthrie-produced *Spooky*, has endured well, Tiny Smiles a sticky-back-plastic Cocteau Twins, the My Bloody Vaselines rush of Superblast! showing where they came from and where they were headed. Follow-up *Split* – Phil King by now replacing Steve Rippon on bass – feels more ponderous. Light From A Dead Star displays a gothy stateliness worthy of their 4AD home, yet the indie-dance shades of Undertow and *Lovelife*-foreshadowing Hypocrite underline their fundamental, unshakable worldliness.

Despite this knowing quality, however, Lush couldn't protect themselves from internal and external pressures. The strain of repeated enforced trips to break America cracked them; the suicide of drummer Chris Acland in 1996 was a blow from which they could not then recover. Yet nearly 20 years later, ahead of Berenyi, Anderson and King's timely regrouping, *Chorus* proves that the light from Lush's star still shines brighter and stronger than anyone might have suspected.

"There was no masterplan."

Lush's Emma Anderson speaks to Victoria Segal.

Do you think Lush were given a raw deal first time around?

"Back then, we were seen as followers; My Bloody Valentine, Cocteau Twins and the Mary Chain were the seminal ones, and us Ride and Slowdive were the copyists. And now we are up with those other bands, which is nice – though it's a bit odd. We always felt back then that we weren't respected – especially in sections of the British music press where shoegazing was very much ridiculed – and now there doesn't seem to be any of that. It's nice this time that people are talking about the music. Back then there was an element that were saying we were just liggers."

What were your wildest dreams for Lush when you were starting out?

"4AD was my favourite label and I was, God, if I ever sign with them that would be amazing, and we did! There was no masterplan, though – there has never been a masterplan."

Which record do you have fondest memories of making?

"The easiest was *Lovelife* because we did it with our soundman [Pete Bartlett] and we did it in London rather than in a residential studio. It's not everyone's favourite album – not mine either – but it was the most straightforward. *Split* was different because we started in Rockfield. We were not really a band that needed to be in residential studios; we didn't need to jam, we didn't need to be kept away from our drug pushers, so it was just six weeks in the middle of Wales. Then Mike Hedges, the producer, said, 'I want to mix it in my place in northern France.' So we had another month in January in this horrible cold house. It didn't even have a living room with a television. The only thing he had was a pinball machine which we had to pay to use."

FILTER REISSUES

A real good time together: The Velvet Underground shade it.

The Velvet Underground

★★★

The Complete Matrix Tapes

POLYDOR/UME. CD

Trance-inducers and heart-pounders recorded over two nights in San Francisco.

If you can get past the redundancy – and what a redundancy it is, as the 4-CDs herein include songs that were originally released as the double album *1969: Velvet Underground Live With Lou Reed* (1974, expanded in '88), the 3-CD *The Bootleg Series, Volume 1: The Quine Tapes* (2001) and two discs from last year's 45th anniversary super deluxe edition of *The Velvet Underground* (with a magnetic, 37-minute Sister Ray), all of which prompts the query, "Who exactly is this set *for?*" Completists who need the nine unreleased cuts, four of which are comparable versions of Some Kinda Love? Audiophiles who want it all in the same mix used on the 18 songs from last year's super deluxe edition? Lou Reed's second cousins? Then it really is an excellent live set from the band's middle period.

Chris Nelson

Wolfgang Flür

★★★★

Eloquence: Complete Works

CHERRY RED. CD/LP

Collaborations compilation courtesy of the self-styled Musik Soldat.

During his time in Kraftwerk (1973-1987) Flür, the world's first electronic live drummer, was not a writer. However, as the Tom Jones of synth pop he exuded a romantic charm. It's this sense of playfulness that infuses Flür's operation today (the promotional video for this compilation is funnier than almost anything currently being shown on Dave). The music is light, graceful, sexy; think a rebooted Ibiza-styled Kraftwerk mixed with the millennial pop beats of Air. Flür plays the role of storyteller set against some standout contributions from a roster of female guest vocalists. I Was A Robot and Cover Girl (a sequel to The Model) revisit his Kraftwerk years. Elsewhere, the music is edgier; a collaboration with Jack Dangers of Meat Beat Manifesto, Staying In The Shadow is all gothic twisted angst, while Axis Of Envy lets the big sonic beats (and the actor within the man) loose.

David Buckley

Various

★★★★

Bobby Gillespie Presents… Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down

ACE. CD/LP

All back to my place with the Primal Scream frontman.

In February 1992, Bobby Gillespie made Select magazine a C90 mixtape of songs that touched his soul – it made for a great piece of music journalism and provided a gateway for many into some fab music. Twenty-three years later, he's compiled a similar tracklisting for Ace Records. Dion's Born To Be With You is the sole duplication, and produced by Phil Spector in 1975 it's one of the most haunting romance records made. It fits the brief for a compilation of "beautiful, fragile and soulful" or as the title puts it, comin' down music. The woozy dream state is further amplified through melancholy tracks by Gram Parsons, Evie Sands, Gene Clark et al. The double LP gatefold on clear vinyl includes the bonus track Cheree (Remix) by Suicide.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★

Slip-Disc: Dishoom's Bombay London Grooves

DISHOOM. CD/LP

The musical connection between the Carnabetian Army and the Maharishis.

The ethos of London's Dishoom bar is probably a million miles from the cheap'n'cheerful Zoroastrian cafés that grew up in India a century ago and boomed until the 1960s, but the soundtrack the owners have put together to announce their arrival in Soho has a swing and a swagger all of its own. Using the brains behind the book India Psychedelic, they have compiled 10 tracks that illustrate the crossover between Carnaby Street and Bombay in the late-1960s – unmistakably, in the case of Ananda Shankar's Jumpin' Jack Flash, where Keef's Gibson Hummingbird is replaced by sitar, and Mohammed Rafi's surfbeat Jaan Pehchan Ho; uncomfortably, for non-musical reasons, in Henry Mancini's theme to the Peter Sellers film The Party; and narcotically on BB Davis & The Red Orchidstra's Get Carter. Utterly dancefloor-worthy – with any luck, this will just be the first volume.

David Hutcheon

Gary Numan

★★★★

Telekon

BEGGARS BANQUET. LP

Stark final instalment of the Machine trilogy in expanded double-vinyl pressing.

Often begrudgingly reassessed as an accidental electronic pioneer, Gary Numan was also critically reviled when *Replicas* and *The Pleasure Principle* topped the UK charts. Numan's thin skin and the terrifying shock of sudden fame came flooding out on 1980's *Telekon*, a sustained howl of despair far more relatable than Roger Waters' pampered perambulations on *The Wall*. Yet for all its persistently bleak lyrics, the melancholic Minimoogs, soothing piano filigrees, sawing violas and gently weeping vibrato of the ARP Pro-Soloist synth still sound bounds ahead of the crowded dystopian curve. With extras including a placid take on Erik Satie's Trois Gymnopédies and contemporaneous singles We Are Glass and I Die: You Die, this weighty and overdue pressing teases out the finer nuances of Numan's all-consuming alienation amid stardom's "cold glass cage".

Andy Cowan

GARY NUMAN
TELEKON

Suburban Lawns

★★★

Suburban Lawns

FUTURISMO. CD/LP

Sole 1981 set from inventive Long Beach new wave quintet.

SUBURBAN LAWNS

So vigorous is Suburban Lawns' channelling of punk energy into digestible pop chunks for the then-burgeoning MTV age, they could only have existed in California in the early 1980s. As quirky and luminescent as comparable contemporaries The B-52's, their hit single Janitor was a novelty in the new age of pop kitsch, due to singer Su Tissue's warbled chorus line "Oh my genitals", yet it detracted from their progressive musical talent. The scratchy jerk-pop of Pioneers bridges the gap between James Chance and Talking Heads, while Computer Date is brilliant punk-funk and Mom And Dad And God frantic, economical white ska. In an alternative history, Suburban Lawns would have followed David Byrne et al to lasting pop greatness – instead we're left a charming cultural artefact that marks the apotheosis of American new wave pop.

Ben Myers

Kurt Cobain

★★

Montage Of Heck – The Home Recordings

UNIVERSAL. CD/DL/LP

Solo Cobain demos and dicking around, packaged for the Christmas market.

kurt cobain

Brett Morgen's impressive documentary looked past the legend to profile Kurt Cobain the man, and this sort-of-soundtrack, stitched together from Kurt's home-recorded demo-tapes, attempts a similar intimacy, but achieves decidedly mixed results. Nirvana songs appear in embryonic states – a funereal crawl through Sappy possesses none of the song's bittersweet charm; Frances Farmer retains its malevolent bristle, even without electricity and distortion – alongside an austere cover of The Beatles' And I Love Her, and a handful of unheard songs which, in their caustic strum and lucid chord formations, offer glimmers of Cobain's pop genius while stopping short of being memorable in their own right. The rest is frustratingly obscure, fragmentary acoustic doodles and vignettes like Reverb that perfectly evoke the tedium of a musician dicking about. It's hard to imagine even hardcore fans listening to this twice, as it sounds too much like an empty barrel being scraped.

Stevie Chick

Scorpions

★★★★

Lovedrive

BMG/SPV. CD/LP

Late '70s hard rock classic; grisly cover by Hipgnosis.

In 1965, a young German rock group, led by 17-year-old guitarist Rudolf Schenker, played its first paid gig. The Scorpions went on to sell 100 million albums: in purely Germanic terms, trouncing Kraftwerk, if not Boney M. Marking the Scorpions' 50th anniversary are deluxe editions of eight albums, including 1982 breakthrough *Blackout* and 1979's *Lovedrive*, a pivotal album for the band, and still their best. Its creation was problematic. New lead guitarist Matthias Jabs, replacing Hendrix obsessive Uli Jon Roth, was briefly ousted by Schenker's famous kid brother Michael, returning after five years with UFO. After the album was released, 'Mad' Michael quit again and Jabs was reinstated. And yet, from this confusion, the Scorpions emerged triumphant, their sound redefined and modernised by sleek, powerful songs: Loving You Sunday Morning, Über-ballad Holiday, titanic instrumental Coast To Coast. Vorsprung durch Technik.

Paul Elliott

The Missing Brazilians

★★★

Warzone

ON U SOUND. CD/DL/LP

Early On-U hybrid of industrial and dub.

One of the least typical releases from an atypical label, *Warzone* was the sole album by mysterious On-U Sound act, The Missing Brazilians. This short-lived project was brokered by Adrian Sherwood and his then wife, Kishi Yamamoto, whose photography graced many of the label's early album sleeves; her unseen hand shaped a lot of early On-U product, as keyboardist/co-producer. *Warzone* veers between reggae abstractions with new wave shadings to pounding, industrial dub soundscapes; the sparse Gentle Killers has whispered vocals from Annie Anxiety, and the messy Savanna Prance a warbling, pre-Massive Attack Shara Nelson, but the set is otherwise wordless. Despite a keyboard sound that places the material firmly in the early '80s, the album has aged surprisingly well, and an added lure is the bonus track, an extended cut of the *Pay It All Back* compilation track, Ace Of Wands.

David Katz

Alan Vega/ Alex Chilton/ Ben Vaughn

★★★★

Cubist Blues

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC/MUNSTER. CD/LP

The fruits of two all-night recording sessions in New York City, December 1994.

If this trio seemed an odd enough combination on paper – Suicide vocalist Alan Vega, and singer-songwriter Ben Vaughn sharing guitars and keyboards with Alex Chilton – the fact that the music here is completely improvised is truly extraordinary. Vega is on fantastic form throughout. He'd only brought in lyrics for one song – Fat City – but thereafter never sounds hesitant as he spontaneously composes these tunes. Producer Drew Vogelman plays drums and occasional drum machine, and the lumbering groove of Candyman sounds a tad like Pere Ubu's Heart Of Darkness with its reverbed guitar and ominous synth drones, while Sister is a menacing slow blues based on what Vega was observing from the studio window. This obscurity stands up alongside Vega's work in either Suicide or his solo projects. They certainly created some magic during these sessions. "By the last song my brain was burning up," says Vega.

Mike Barnes

Bembeya Jazz

★★★★

Bembeya Jazz

STERN'S. LP

It wasn't all *Sgt. Pepper* during the Summer of Love.

This is the pick of four vinyl reissues covering the 1967 output of the Guinea-based label Syliphone when a post-independence, government-decreed policy of musical authenticité required the nationalising of private big bands. Alongside Bembeya Jazz, ensembles such as Orchestre De La Paillote (aka Kélétigui Et Ses Tambourinis) and Jardin De Guinée (Balla Et Ses Balladins) – both also reissued – were Africanising Cuban rumba for the aspirational residents of Conakry, and there is a beautiful optimism to the results, as if dancing cheek-to-cheek until midnight was all that would ever matter. Bembeya had a handful of aces, including a terrific horn section, lead vocalist Demba Camara and the superb teenage guitarist Sekou 'Diamond Fingers' Diabaté, who still occasionally brings together a band under the Bembeya name and shines here on Guinée Hety Horémoun and Bembeyako. Best buy the set.

David Hutcheon

Johnny Hammond

★★★★

Gears

BGP. CD/LP

Overlooked funky jazz classic rides again.

Known as Johnny 'Hammond' Smith until 1971, when he purportedly adopted his organ manufacturer's moniker as his surname (to prevent him being confused with jazz guitarist, Johnny Smith), this Kentucky keyboardist rose to fame as a leading proponent of hard bop and soul jazz in the '60s. In 1971, he signed with Creed Taylor's Kudu label, switched to playing electric piano and immediately began to experience serious chart action. *Gears* captures Hammond in '75 recording for jazz indie Milestone under the aegis of rising writers/producers Fonce and Larry Mizell, who had successfully transformed jazz trumpeter Donald Byrd into an R&B hit-maker. Here, the Mizells use the same formula they used for Byrd, creating smooth yet sinewy, hypnotic grooves punctuated by occasional vocals comprised of rough-hewn harmonies. A feast for jazz-funk addicts.

Charles Waring

Duke Ellington

★★★★★

The Columbia Studio Albums Collection 1959-1961

SONY. CD

Ten albums from jazz giant's umpteeneth purple patch.

Of the 10 discs here, four are essential, the other six merely uplifting, rewarding, intriguing and deeply satisfying. *First Time! The Count Meets The Duke* is a Basie/Ellington face-off/love-in as terrific as you thought it might be; *The Nutcracker Suite and Peer Gynt Suites 1 & 2/Suite Thursday* finds the jazz innovator reinterpreting classical themes with subtle and witty invention (the Tchaikovsky is brilliant); his groundbreaking *Anatomy Of A Murder* soundtrack does indeed evoke crime, passion, betrayal and testy courtroom drama; *Blues In Orbit*, recorded in two midnight-5am sessions, is an off-the-cuff blast. A real treat for anyone who loves Ellington's *Money Jungle*, *Piano In The Foreground* is another small group revelation, a work-out that shows that, while maybe the orchestra was his best instrument, the piano was the one where you feel closest to the core of his genius. It spins perfectly before or after *Thelonious Monk Plays Duke Ellington*.

Geoff Brown

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Buena Vista Social Club

Buena Vista Social Club

WORLD CIRCUIT

Released in 1997 and capturing, in Ry Cooder's words, "the tail end of the comet" that was Cuba's golden generation, *Buena Vista Social Club* was an unlikely hit – when other plans foundered, recording old-timers was just a way of not wasting studio time – but long before sales passed the eight-million mark, every elderly musician on the island found themselves in demand, whether for recording sessions or international tours. Vinyl barely contributed to this bonanza, however, as only limited numbers were released (in the US and Japan), but this belated five-star release sounds and looks like the format the music always deserved. The mastering is ear-opening – Cooder's slide guitar on Chan Chan and the spaces Rubén González leaves between notes on Pueblo Nuevo feel like new discoveries. The likes of Compay Segundo and Ibrahim Ferrer may be long gone, but this is a fine way to remember them. *David Hutcheon*

Give us a Braque: Vega, Chilton and Vaughn in a Cubist moment.

FILEUNDER

Tout les coolest

Returned, the first French jazz LPs. By Jim Irvin.

Parlez vous jazz?: Dizzy Gillespie, recorded at Minton's with Monk and Christian.

In the October 1952 edition of French jazz journal Bulletin Du Hot Club De France, writer Hugues Panassé warmed his – presumably hip and open-minded – readership to "Beware of the 33rpm". Yes, the long-player apparently posed some kind of threat to the French jazzer who, until then, had traditionally consumed the music via 78s and 45rpm EPs. Whatever the problem, the 33rpm disc was to be the way forward for the next 30 years, and the march in France was lead by Jazz-Disques (later Disques Vogues) with three LPs by Duke Ellington, Sidney Bechet & Claude Luter and Dizzy Gillespie's *With Strings*, released in June 1951. Twenty further albums followed swiftly in stiff cardboard sleeves that opened at the top and were decorated with lively graphics by Pierre Merlin, artist and cornet player in Claude Luter's band.

Licensed from US labels like Dot, Dial, King, Apollo and Blue Note, there were jazz titles by Stan Getz, Charlie Parker, Erroll Garner, Bud Powell and Miles Davis, plus jump-blues (Wynonie Harris), gospel (Mahalia Jackson, The Spirit Of Memphis Quartet), Dixieland and boogie-woogie.

In subsequent years, anyone lucky enough to stumble across one of these releases immediately felt several degrees cooler. They became sought-after totems to collectors of jazz, French ephemera and '50s artwork. Now anyone can own then, as 41 of those 10-inch albums, EPs and occasional 45s have been gathered as *Jazz From America On Disques Vogue* (★★★★★ Sony Legacy), a mouth-watering box of 20 discs in facsimile sleeves featuring the artists above, and many others.

Some of these were already heritage sets – the sole 12-inch disc of the time, by Jelly Roll Morton, was compiled from 1939 recordings; an album credited to electric guitar pioneer Charlie Christian is taken from two famous live dates with Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk recorded in 1941 at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem a year before Christian died, aged 25; the Art Tatum album came from Gene Norman's Just Jazz productions in 1947, the same period as the Charlie Parker dates and a brilliant collection of singles for Aladdin by tenor-sax giant Lester Young. Contemporary releases included early albums by the Dave Brubeck Quartet recorded for Fantasy, vibes player Red Norvo's Trio and the celebrated Pacific Jazz sessions by Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker.

There are hidden gems on these CDs – such as an EP by The Dominoes and a nifty Earl Bostic album – that you'll need the credit booklet to find, and the presentation is a little confusing. That aside, this is a desirable time-capsule of mid-20th century cool.

> "DESIRABLE TIME-CAPSULE OF OF MID-20TH CENTURY COOL."

JAZZ
Vogue
LA DISCOTHEQUE IDEALE
35 ALBUMS ORIGINAUX

THE 5TH DIMENSION

The 5th Dimension

★★★

4 Classic Albums 1970-73

RAVEN. CD

Four mid-period LPs of sunlit sounds on 2CDs from the crack soul/jazz vocal crew paired with pop writers like Laura Nyro (Save The Country from 1970's fine *Portrait*) or Nilsson (Open Your Window) from 1973. *CP*

VIVA LA ROCK 'N' ROLL
The Complete Deptford Fun City
alternative t.v.

Alternative TV

★★★★

Viva La Rock'N'Roll

CHERRY RED. CD

Four albums from Mark P, 1977-80, of strange punk, experimental dramaturgy, Dada-esque live confrontation and solo contradictions to examine, plus loads of extras. Surely one of punk's most overlooked creative minds. *IH*

I WOULD DREAM
MIKE FIEMS

Mike Fiems

★★★★

I Would Dream

MAPACHE. LP

Hard-to-find sunshine folk pop, produced by Link Wray's brother Vernon at his Arizona Desert Record Factory in 1974. Remastered from original tapes, it is a mellow dusty groove, with just a twist of bad dune buggy vibes. *AM*

ARETHA FRANKLIN

Aretha Franklin

★★★★

The Atlantic Albums Collection

RHINO. CD/DL

Not "complete" – despite 16 albums, three of them doubles, the five she released 1974-79 are absent. Still, *I Never Loved A Man…* to *Live In Philly '72 was* her greatest era. Cost? Approx £3 an LP; no booklet, natch. *GB*

THE VERY BEST OF RONNIE SPECTOR

Ronnie Spector

★★★★

The Very Best Of

SONG. CD/DL

Adding six tracks to last year's version, including Baby Please Don't Go with the E Street Band (Say Goodbye To Hollywood's B-side), Marshall Crenshaw's rollicking Something's Gonna Happen and Amy Rigby cover All I Want with Keith Richards. *CP*

TAMPA RED
THE UNSUNG KING OF THE BLUES

Tampa Red

★★★★

Dynamite! The Unsung King Of The Blues

ACE. CD

Fifty slices of Red blues, 1941-53, as Tampa's easy vocals cruise on influential originals from lubricious She Want To Sell My Monkey and Let Me Play With Your Poodle to much-covered She's Dynamite. *GB*

The BiRTH of SURF

Various

★★★

The Birth Of Surf Volume 3

ACE. CD

Castanets and a flamenco twirl on Billy Mure's Flaming Guitar (1959) get 26 more surf instros afloat, from familiar (Chantays, Dick Dale, Surfaris) to all kinds of precursors (to garage, punk) and classical-tune thefts. *GB*

Jazz
10 CLASSIC ORIGINAL ALBUMS

Various

★★★★

Jazz: 10 Classic Original Albums

SONY MUSIC. CD

Instant cred stocking filler for neophyte jazzers: includes Billie Holiday's *Lady In Satin*, Miles's *Kind Of Blue*, Monk's *Dream* and the million-selling cosmic squelch of Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters*. *JB*

Alamy, Dustin Cohen

FILTER REISSUES EXTRA

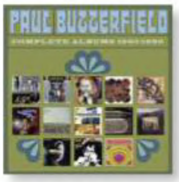
Ashford & Simpson

★★★★

So So Satisfied

BBR. CD

Another month, another two A&S LPs reissued. For *So So…* they held on to their best songs – Tried, Tested And Found True; Over And Over (three versions of both here) – and had a fine NY studio team on hand. *GB*



Paul Butterfield

★★★★

Complete Albums 1965-1980

RHINO. CD

Bumper blues package of 13 albums, one a double, scoops up Butterfield's Blues Band, Better Days and solo work. First LP, with Elvin Bishop, Sam Lay and Michael Bloomfield, still hottest among the scorchers. *GB*

Change

★★★★

Reach For The Sky

GROOVELINE. CD/DL/LP

Two-CD anthology of Jacques Fred Petrus's studio band that gave Luther Vandross his solo start in 1980 (Searching, Glow Of Love). Petrus's clever Italian job on Chic's disco blueprint broke into SOS Band territory by 1984 on Change Of Heart. *GB*

Cream

★★★★

The Singles 1967-1970

UNIVERSAL. LP

Covetable box of 10 7-inch UK/US mono 45s in contemporary sleeves. For a heavy-blues supergroup, Cream cut oddly off-message 45s, like debut Wrapping Paper, but also stone classics like I Feel Free, Badge and Sunshine Of Your Love. *JI*

Marshall Crenshaw

★★★

#392: The EP Collection

RED RIVER ENTERTAINMENT. CD

Crenshaw's 12 picks from his six 10-inch vinyls (2010-15), six covers and originals. Ageless, tuneful voice; nifty guitar; a live track and a demo as bonus. Pop power. *GB*

Marvin Gaye

★★★★

Volume Two 1966-1970

UNIVERSAL. LP

Second sequence of Gaye vinyl, eight this time, in a box. Four duet LPs (three Tammi Terrells; a Kim Weston); the rest (*Moods Of…*; *MPG*; *In The Groove*; *That's The Way Love Is*) exhibit tension between his crooner desire and the label's demand for pop. *GB*

Serge Gainsbourg

★★★

Live

UNIVERSAL. CD/DL/LP

Anniversary reissue of Serge's 1985 Casino de Paris concert as double-CD/DVD and 3-LPs. The synthesized strings, slap bass and sax are sleazy, dated, and for '80s-model "Gainsbarre" – insouciant in stone-washed denim – entirely correct. *AM*

Anna Homler and Steve Moshier

★★★

Breadwoman And Other Tales

RVNG INTL. CD/DL/LP

Salvaged from mid-'80s tapes, LA performance artist Homler's loaf-headed alter ego chants sit over composer Moshier's hovering kosmische drones. *AM*

The Kinks

★★★★

Sunny Afternoon

BMG. CD/DL

Original versions of the songs that have found West End glory avoids being yet another 'best of' with a decent vault raid. Choice cuts, singles, a slew of sessions tracks and some old interview japes make a respectable collection. *PS*

Okkervil River

★★★★

Black Sheep Boy

JAGJAGUWAR. CD/DL/LP

Tenth anniversary box of Okkervil's rightly admired Tim Hardin-inspired concept LP, as Will Sheff's mournful cover morphs into a darkly surreal song-cycle. Comes with a Great American Songbook CD recorded six months prior. *CP*

Lou Reed

★★★

The Sire Years

WARNER BROS. CD/DL

Bargain-priced frill-free box of Reed's 1989-2004 Warners albums offers classic *New York*, underrated *Set The Twilight Reeling*, Warhol elegy *Songs For Drella* with John Cale, tough-love *Ecstasy*, spotty *Magic & Loss*, starry Poe concept *The Raven*, and two live sets. *KC*

The Ruts

★★★★

The Virgin Years

CAROLINE. CD

Until Malcolm Owen's OD, the muscular west London quartet were destined to transcend punk with hard rock and dub skills. This 4-CD box has their sole LP *The Crack* plus comp *Grin & Bear It*, BBC sessions and a searing 1979 Marquee set. *KC*

Various

★★★

R&B Hipshakers Vol. 4

VAMPI SOUL. CD

Aka *Bossa Nova And Grits*, here be 20 more King/Federal truths by Little Esther (Phillips, just 18), JB guitarist to be Jimmy Nolen, JB influences The 5 Royales and Little Willie John, plus a young, assured Jimmy Scott and Young John Watson, 'Guitar' great. *GB*

Norman Westberg

★★★

13

ROOM 40. CD/DL

Originally recorded in 2013, only previously available in a limited edition of 75. The debut Room 40 recording from the Swans guitarist is a trio of sinister, long-form drone works, chilly soundtracks for lone trips into the frozen north. *AM*

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COMING NEXT MONTH

Suede, Janis Joplin, Savages, Dylan LeBlanc, Baaba Maal and many more.

No soothing the Savages: new album due next month.

Courtesy of Angel Air

Aquarius practices

Caught on time's rainy top deck, nestling on the bus shelter roof of obscurity: Yardbirds/Renaissance alumni explore a musical path to spiritual self-help.

Playing that long lunar note: Stairway's Louis Cennamo (left) and Jim McCarty at the Temple of Aeolus (keeper of the winds), Kew Gardens, 1988.

Stairway

Moonstone

NEW WORLD CASSETTES, 1988

Stairway was drawn from the first edition of Renaissance, namely Louis Cennamo, Jane Relf and Jim McCarty, the latter the drummer with the classic '60s Yardbirds line-up. Thus the ghost of the 1960s faced the spirit of the 1980s when *Moonstone*, Stairway's second album, found itself hovering between the possibly substance-enhanced rock and dance sounds of the late '80s – see *Perfect Motion: Jon Savage's Secret History Of Second Wave Psychedelia 1988-93* for a representative tracklist – and new age music, a genre that can still trigger debate about whether it's anaemic sonic wallpaper or akin to the celestial resonances heard in near-death states.

Smouldering into form during the mid-1970s, new age appealed initially to adults who, as post-Woodstock collegians, squandered their grants on the latest albums by Vangelis, Curved Air, Mike Oldfield, Tangerine Dream and others. Significantly, Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* was a pronounced influence on the new age colossus and *Moonstone* co-producer Clifford White.

His restfully mellow debut, *Ascension*, had sold 60,000 copies within five years of issue in 1985; during its eight-year existence, Stairway likewise shifted albums by the ton, albeit through non-chart-return outlets, as did other releases glorying in sleeve designs depicting winged unicorns, castles and wispy clouds.

The creative pivot of Stairway's first effort, 1987's *Aquamarine*, was Louis Cennamo. A virtuoso bass player, he'd served The Herd, Colosseum, and Steamhammer as well as James Taylor and, on a cover of The Yardbirds' elegiac Turn Into Earth, Al Stewart.

In 1974, he joined the short-lived Armageddon, helmed by Keith Relf – another former Yardbird/Renaissance man – to plough a similar hard rock furrow to Led Zeppelin.

"After Armageddon," remembers Cennamo, "I made *Diamond Harbour*, an album of spiritual music, which was traceable to a chemical awakening in San Francisco whilst touring with Renaissance. Its insights and feeling of total bliss led me to the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, with whom I studied and travelled to India. I left in 1984 to practise eventually as a member of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers.

"On my birthday in 1986," Louis continues, "Jim and I discussed what was central to our original purpose with Renaissance, which was making inspirational music with healing potential. Rather than commercial product, we wanted to create a more peaceful sound vibration using less familiar instruments. So I switched from bass to guitar and Jim from drums to keyboards. Then we contacted New World Cassettes, a new age company about to base itself in rural Suffolk, and, on their recommendation, taped *Aquamarine* and then *Moonstone* cheaply in Clifford White's home."

"There was something fun about the cottage industry side to it," adds McCarty. "There was no pressure, certainly no touring beyond a few concerts – at venues like St James Church in Piccadilly and at a Festival of Mind and Body, those sort of alternative events, doing just the Stairway stuff – apart from [The Yardbirds'] Turn Into Earth on one occasion."

"I was employed as a session singer," attests Jane Relf, "although a very willing and consensual party to what was being achieved."

"Clifford was brought in as necessary too," adds McCarty, "but, essentially, Stairway was me and Louis, and was intended as new age with a kick to it. Because of where Louis and I had come from, there was bound to be a lot of rhythm in it."

"IT WAS INTENDED AS NEW AGE WITH A KICK TO IT."

This was to be palpable on Stairway's later offerings, 1989's *Chakra Dance* and 1992's *Medicine Dance*, both recorded with psychologist Malcolm Stern. Nevertheless, McCarty and Cennamo's beat group experiences manifested convincingly on *Moonstone*, via three tartly arranged bona-fide songs – Relf's clear soprano is to the fore on the spellbinding Bird Of Paradise, while McCarty sang the almost Blue Nile-like Looking Inside and the aqueous Lavender Down.

The last-named steer close to a field of late 1960s pop that created autumnal moods of beautiful sadness: in relation to The Yardbirds, think Still I'm Sad, Turn Into Earth and Only The Black Rose. The remaining pieces were wordless, incorporating plainsong, raga and further reference points associated with the less blueswailing aspects of The Yardbirds.

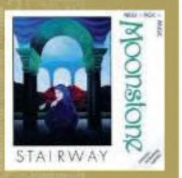
These evocations of the timeless, magical dreamtime – plus Stairway's bucolic lyricism, acoustic emphasis and vaguely classical aftertaste – were also in keeping with Relf's comment that, "One of the nicest things said about Renaissance was that we were 'troubadours from fairyland'."

McCarty's light baritone was to be prominent too on *Search For The Dreamchild* (1995) and *Gothic Dream* (1996) by Pilgrim, the entity that followed Stairway and which went against new age's usual dictates by containing a preponderance of real songs, chiefly melodies to verse from Keats, Byron, Shelley, Poe and Pilgrim's own Carmen Willcox.

As for Stairway, their music hovers yet in particular dental surgeries, painting studios, health food stores, meditation and improvised dance classes, and various crystal-and-scented candle new age outlets (there are several called Moonstone in Britain alone).

Jim McCarty, meanwhile, is currently back behind the drums and leading a new line-up of The Yardbirds.

Alan Clayson



CREDITS

Tracks: The Lovers / Sunset Point / Bird Of Paradise / Blue Pool / Undine Forest/ Alcazar / Lavender Down / Looking Inside / La Giralda

Producers: Jim McCarty, Louis Cennamo and Clifford White

Recorded: Clifford White's home studio, Edgware, London, 1988

Personnel: Jane Relf (vcls), Jim McCarty (vcls, keybds, perc), Louis Cennamo (acoustic gtr), Clifford White (keybds, perc)

Released: June 1988 (cassette only)

Reissued on CD: New World NWCD 168 (on March 21, 1994). Five of *Moonstone*'s eight tracks are included on Stairway retrospective *Pearls Of The Deep* (Angel Air).

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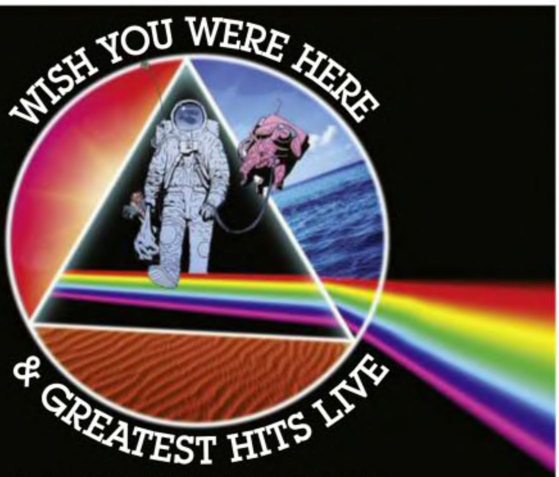

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BEATLES
RINGO
LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH
POGUES
PEACE & LOVE

Wax vobiscum: the interior of the Rock On shop, Camden Town, at the turn of the '90s.

TOPDECK

Ace

The greatest reissue label. By MOJO staff.

It's curious to reflect that Ace Records and its related labels – including Kent, Big Beat and Chiswick – can all be traced back to Ted Carroll's Rock On stall on Portobello Market, which opened in 1971 selling a rootsy variety of rock'n'roll, soul and blues oldies to Jimmy Page, Phil Lynott and hordes of diehard teds (later customers of Carroll's expanding concern included Malcolm McLaren, Joe Strummer and other punk faces).

But in 1975 Carroll, with partner Roger Armstrong, founded the Chiswick label to release records by The Count Bishops. They were soon joined by Trevor Churchill, and wax by The 101'ers, Motörhead and The Damned followed. In 1978 the team set up the Ace label – taking the name from the Mississippi R&B imprint – to release vintage but still-vital American music, quietly inventing the quality reissue market it continues to serve. Says Armstrong, who also worked at Rock On, "What we are now is informed by those early years behind the counter."

Over the decades Ace and its sub-labels would curate and re-present the catalogues of companies including Modern, Specialty, Fame and Stax, with rigorous attention to what they call the 'three Rs – reclamation, restoration and research'. Original tapes would be tracked down, digitised and mastered: well-illustrated and informative sleevenotes took the listener even closer to the action. Then all you had to do was enjoy the music. A random selection from the discographies – Armstrong estimates that they've notched up 4,880 releases – will yield treasures by B.B. King, Elmore James, Wanda Jackson, The Cramps, John Fahey and Terry Callier, plus numerous outstanding compilations.

> "WHAT WE ARE NOW IS INFORMED BY THOSE EARLY YEARS BEHIND THE COUNTER..."

Now, 40 years after they started, 10 releases to illustrate Ace's interconnected vision of all that's best in rock'n'roll, soul, blues, R&B, gospel and jazz. "How to explain it?" wonders Armstrong. "Well, the hip bone's connected to the thigh bone, y'know? That's what it's all about."

CAST YOUR VOTES!

After this month's plunge into the world of 10 Ace, next month we want your Top 10 LPs by Jeff Tweedy and bands. Send your selections to www.mojo4music.com or e-mail your Top 10 to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Jeff Tweedy' and we will print the best comments.

10 Various

Rock On

ACE 2008, CD **£11.50**

"A crucial source for rockin' wax," is how Ted Carroll recalled his two Rock On market stalls and the Camden Town record shop next door to Holt's Dr Marten boots outlet, which closed its doors in 1996. This righteous prescription of rock'n'roll, R&B, Cajun, girl groups and blues – including early Rock On must-haves like Vince Taylor's Brand New Cadillac (to you, £12 on 7-inch in 1975), The Flamin' Groovies' Slow Death, Camel Walk by The Ikettes, Slim Harpo's Shake Your Hips, Dr. Feelgood's Back In The Night and, a memo to us all, Honest Papas Love Their Mamas Better by Fats Domino, among other instant-party selections – remains a fine distillation of their always-new-no-matter-how-old, eclectic approach. Incidentally, the first stall was saluted on Thin Lizzy's 1973 hit The Rocker, when Phil Lynott sang of Carroll, "Teddy Boy, he's got them all."

Sam COOKE
WITH THE SOUL STIRRERS

4 Sam Cooke

...With The Soul Stirrers

ACE/SPECIALTY 1991, CD **£11.50**

Ace's *Legends Of Specialty Series* in the '90s lifted the veil on the outstanding gospel groups on Art Rupe's label and introduced to the secular world terrific solo singers such as Alex Bradford, Brother Joe May and Dorothy Love Coates. But Specialty's jewel had long been The Soul Stirrers, whose lead voices had included R. H. Harris, the man Sam Cooke replaced in 1951. Sam was just 19. This 25-song compilation encompassed some of the singer's earliest recordings with the Stirrers (Peace In The Valley, 1951), his own songs like Nearer To Thee and Be With Me Jesus, both from '55, by which time he'd got his hat and coat in readiness to embrace pop. Thus his gospel song Wonderful, recorded February 2, 1956, by December that year is remodelled as Lovable. In all, a fascinating portrait of a great artist in the process of reinvention.

Entries by Geoff Brown, Ian Harrison, Andrew Male

9 **The Damned** Machine Gun Etiquette

CHISWICK 1979, CD £11.50 DOWNLOAD £7.99

They'd already split and reformed once, but anyone imagining The Damned's third album to be some variety of punk cash-in would have been quickly disabused of the notion. Instead, it was a breakneck and deceptively nuanced mash-up of speedy attack, progressive rock, music hall humour, finely realised pop songwriting and other curiosities, not least opener (and Top 20 hit) Love Song commencing with the voice of Coronation Street's Albert Tatlock asking "How do?" The latest reissue comes with 10 bonus tracks, including Part 4 of the already schizoid Smash It Up, which sounds curiously like a Dire Straits outtake. A record of genuine ambition from messrs Vanian, Scabies, Sensible and Ward, and co-produced by Armstrong, it's proof of the Ace organisation's A&R prowess.

THE NEW FOLK SOUND OF TERRY CALLIER

8 **Terry Callier** The New Folk Sound Of…

BGP 1995, CD £7.43

If any Ace reissue can be said to be pivotal, it's this. Terry Callier's '70s recordings had already been rediscovered on the UK soul-jazz scene, but his 1968 Prestige debut was something else. Originally recorded in Chicago in 1964, by blues producer Sam Charters, it's a collection of well-worn folk standards (900 Miles, Cotton Eyed Joe) transformed by Callier's warm, melancholy voice, finger-picked acoustic guitar, serpentine delivery and Coltrane-inspired twin bass arrangements into something weightless, beguiling and otherworldly. A big influence on Beth Orton, Beth Gibbons and the whole mid-'90s folk revival, it was reissued by Ace in 2003 with three extra and equally haunting tracks: Be My Woman, Jack O Diamonds and The Golden Apples Of The Sun.

Lightnin' HOPKINS HIS BLUES

7 **Lightnin' Hopkins** His Blues

ACE 2010, CD £14.91

Released as the soundtrack for the biography Lightnin' Hopkins – His Life And Blues, written by Alan Govenar, who also supplies the sleevenotes here, this superb 1947-to-'69 overview shows all sides of the revered and influential Texas bluesman. Early successes in the late '40s and '50s include electric rocking sides like Katie May Blues and the driving guitar thrills of Hopkins' Sky Hop, while his rediscovery as a country blues totem in the folk-reviving '60s opened the way for the nimble acoustic picking heard here on Mojo Hand and Up On Telegraph Avenue, among other selections. Imagine Lightnin' with shades, hat and stogie, demanding to be paid in advance and refusing to play a song more than once, and marvel.

THE UK SUE LABEL STORY
THE WORLD OF GUY STEVENS

6 **Various** The UK Sue Label Story: The World Of Guy Stevens

ACE 2008, CD £11.50

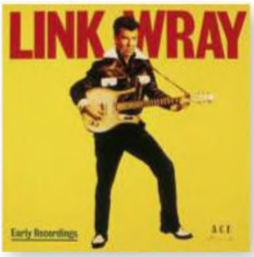
The first volume of three CDs celebrating what started as the UK outlet of Juggy Murray's US label. The Scene DJ Guy Stevens, an irrepressible, if maverick, enthusiast, broadened the remit, using many tracks on Vee-Jay, Fire, Goldwax, even Liberty. Thus Guy's label brought to the UK setlist R&B staples like the original Land Of A 1,000 Dances, Watch Your Step, Let's Stick Together, You Can't Sit Down and more plus the blues of Elmore James, JB Lenoir, Louisiana Red and others, and a jazz groove courtesy of organist Jimmy McGriff and singer Ernestine Anderson. Here, in 26 tracks, the sweaty excitement of a mid-'60s club is packed tight with an evocative sleevenote. (NB: *Vol 4* imagines a Sue release after Guy's death).

TAKE ME TO THE RIVER
A SOUTHERN SOUL STORY 1961-1977

5 **Various** Take Me To The River: A Southern Soul Story 1961-1977

KENT 2008, BOX SET £28.40

Three CDs, 75 songs, to tell a 17-year story, and *Take Me To The River* was so successful in its enterprise that it won Best Compilation at 2009's MOJO Awards. As well as expected entrants (Stax, Volt, Atlantic; Otis, Aretha, Pickett) there are subtle choices (Go Home Girl by Arthur Alexander, not the usual Anna or You Better Move On), and despite the gradual incursion of disco in the '70s CD3 *The River* maintains a remarkably vigorous retinue of heartbreak (I'm Through Trying To Prove My Love To You by Bobby Womack), cheatin' (Denise La Salle's Breaking Up Somebody's Home) and humour (Bobby Newsome's Jody Come Back And Get Your Shoes might be an ear-opener). A 72-page booklet answers most of the questions you may have about the terrific soul on this can't-be-beat digest.



3 **Link Wray** Early Recordings

CHISWICK 1978, CD £11.50 LP £12.05

This early '60s round-up shows how North Carolina guitarist Wray took the kind of hotrodding instrumental rock blueprint used to benign effect by Duane Eddy or The Ventures and added a mean edge of delinquency that would bewitch the likes of Iggy Pop, Jimmy Page, The Cramps and Mark E. Smith. Thanks to distortion and a feral playing style, his aesthetic is heavy and possibly radioactive on the flick-knife strum of Jack The Ripper or Hidden Charms' needles-in-the-red malignant stagger. It also includes a version of his signature song Rumble. The second-longest running item in the Ace catalogue – rockabilly comp *Hollywood Rock'N'Roll* is the first – *Early Recordings* has just been newly-expanded.

2 **Various** Theme Time Radio Hour

ACE 2015, BOX SET £46

As Billy Bragg points out in a linernote for Season 2 of this three-part, 6-CD official set, radio is in Dylan's blood and these killer selections from his 2006-2009 show prove a gold mine of gutbucket R&B, old timey gems, and more recent selections (The Dirtbombs, Laura Cantrell). All because Dylan was playing quite a few Ace releases, and a tentative enquiry to Dylan's management was met with "you guys are great, why don't you do the compilation?"

Dave Godin's Deep Soul Treasures Taken From The Vaults… Volume 1
KENT SOUL
A no-compromise compilation of outstanding, classic and rare Deep Soul titles… the ultimate in American Soul music…
featuring Larry Banks The Knight Brothers Raw Spitt Irma Thomas Jaibi Eddie & Ernie Bessie Banks Zerben R Hicks and other artists

1 **Various** Dave Godin's Deep Soul Treasures: Taken From The Vaults… Volume 1

KENT 1997, CD £11.50

Having written the notes for *Volume 1* of Kent's *Birth Of Soul*, Godin, a fervent if dogmatic enthusiast, led Ace to his trove. He described deep soul as the "unfeigned successor to, and development out of, the blues" with its focus on love, loss, struggle, redemption and 'now' issues (Zerben R Hicks' Lights Out and Raw Spitt's Songs To Sing address the Vietnam War). Ballads don't wholly dominate the 25 tracks – Dori Grayson's Try Love and Brendetta Davis's I Can't Make It Without Him are mid-tempo sounds – but I'm Not The One by Larry Banks (a favourite writer of Godin's, he penned then-wife Bessie Banks's Go Now) and Otis-leaning styles of Billy Young and Timmy Willis are deep, soulful, rare treasures.

Faster pussycat: Roger Armstrong (left) and Ted Carroll flank Poison Ivy of The Cramps.

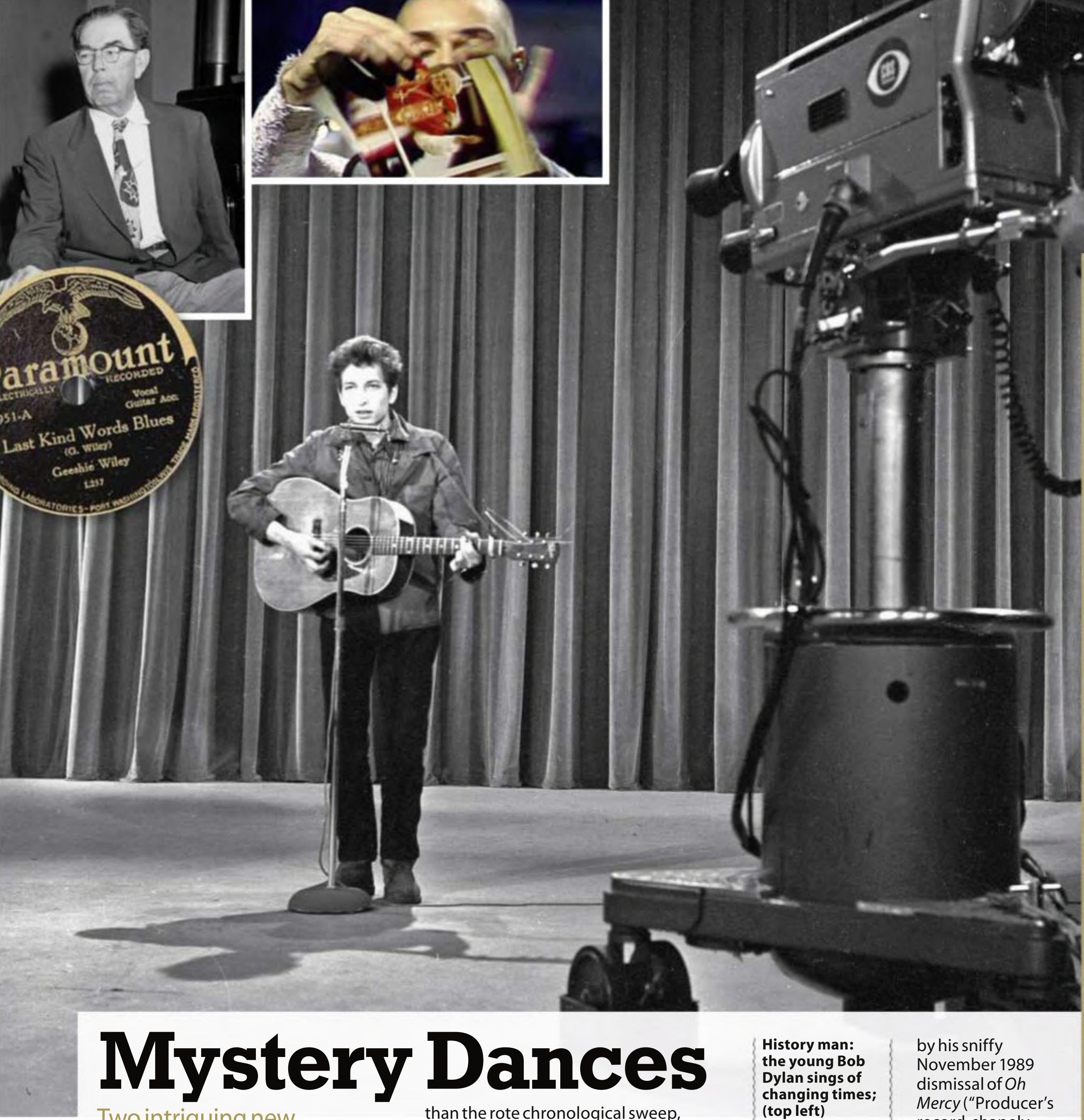
Austin Nelson

NOW DIG THIS

HOP WILSON & HIS BUDDIES
STEEL GUITAR FLASH!

Having come this far, there are *hundreds* of albums in the Ace catalogue worthy of your attention. Where to start? The 12 volume all killer series *The Golden Age Of American Rock'N'Roll*, where familiar gems rub up against the lesser known; while *The Chiswick Story* collects key tracks by The Count Bishops, The Gorillas, The 101'ers and more. Then? Hop Wilson & His Buddies' *Steel Guitar Flash?* More soul on the Kent label? The Sonics' *Boom?* Truly, Ace are the fathers of reissue specialists like Dust To Digital, Light In The Attic and Numero Group: see acerecords.co.uk for more.

the SONICS BOOM



Mystery Dances

Two intriguing new collections from the Grand Poobah of American music writing. By Danny Eccleston.

Three Songs, Three Singers, Three Nations

★★★★

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. £14.95

Real Life Rock

★★★★

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS. £25

Greil Marcus

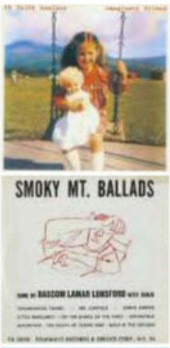
Greil Marcus is the rock writer as medium, the close-listener who heard Johnny Rotten channelling England's radical 17th century Ranters and sensed the ghost voices speaking through Bob Dylan's *Basement Tapes*. For him, music is a multiverse, its fabric constantly warped and rent, bringing the past, present and future into conjunction. Sometimes you can even dance to it.

Like his recent History Of Rock'N'Roll In Ten Songs (Yale, now in paperback) – a typical tugging at loose threads rather than the rote chronological sweep, somehow incorporating essays on The Flamin' Groovies and sound artist Christian Marclay – both his new books are compilations of sorts. Three Songs… is a short trio of lectures ostensibly about American folk songs: one that traces the trajectory of mystery (possibly lesbian) blueswoman Geeshie Wiley's Last Kind Words Blues; another that mines the subversive resonances of I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground; a third centring on Bob Dylan's Ballad Of Hollis Brown. All three are wonderful: emblematic of Marcus's interest in how words and melodies find truths that survive the centuries, or appear likely to. "Ballad Of Hollis Brown is three songs," writes Marcus: "Bob Dylan's song; the folk song; and his song that sounds like a folk song, authorless, written by history and weather, no original and no copy."

Marcus is a scholar, certainly, but those familiar only with his mining for arcana won't have read his Real Life Rock Top 10s, the smash'n'grab lists of contemporary cultural gleanings he wrote for The Village Voice, Salon and others between 1986 and 2014. Collated, they reveal another Marcus, at once more playful and more savage – surprising you with a penchant for the Th' Faith Healers or Carter USM and a bitter aversion to Lucinda Williams, while the impression of him as Dylan's corner man is challenged by his sniffy November 1989 dismissal of *Oh Mercy* ("Producer's record, shapely and airless") and more besides. Meanwhile, he's a dab hand at highlighting other writers' best insights – like Simon Reynolds' "Pop or a better world. The choice is yours!" – and is still one of few writers with interesting things to say about the role of film and TV in rock'n'roll's manifestation. Watching Sinéad O'Connor rip up the Pope on Saturday Night Live in 1993 he notes: "Ask yourself this: given the chance to say what I wanted to the whole country, would I have had the nerve?"

On top of everything else, and perhaps more so in these concentrated formats than in the trancelike longform of, say, Lipstick Traces, he just makes your spine tingle with the feeling he has for music and the things he can perceive in it. Of Geeshie Wiley he writes, "she sounds like she's singing out of the ground, like she's been buried alive, like she doesn't mind…" Some would call it pretentious, or say that Marcus is imagining, *projecting* stuff that simply isn't there. And, of course, he is. That's what the space between the notes is *for*.

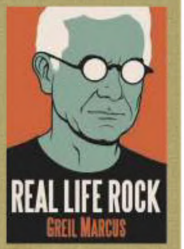
History man: the young Bob Dylan sings of changing times; (top left) Bascom Lamar Lunsford; Sinéad O'Connor tears into the Pope; Geeshie Wiley 78rpm; music as approved by Greil Marcus.



"WILEY SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S SINGING OUT OF THE GROUND."

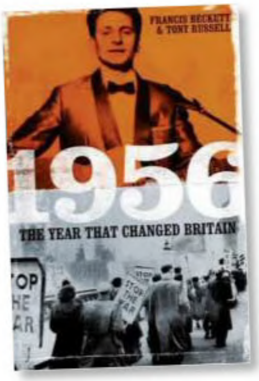
Getty Images (2)

GREIL MARCUS



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Bascom Lamar Lunsford, author of the best-known recording of I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground, was, variously, a seed salesman, a lawyer, a beekeeper, a newspaper editor, and worked for the US Justice Department tracking down draft dodgers during World War I.
- The notoriously poor-quality 'shellac' used by Paramount Records in the '20s and '30s – on which Geeshie Wiley's Last Kind Words was released – contained lamp black, cotton filling and clay from the banks of the Milwaukee river.
- Evidence of Randy Newman's drollery, Pt. A Million. Newman on Sail Away, as gleaned from NPR by Marcus's Real Life Rock Top 10 of October 22, 2003: "It ended racism in this country. Kids today don't remember, now that it's gone away…"



1956: The Year That Changed Britain

★★★★

Francis Beckett & Tony Russell

BITEBACK. £20

An evocative look at a key year in the UK.

My one-time fellow factory worker, David, would appreciate this book. He was a communist in 1956 but changed his allegiance to the Labour Party when the Russians crushed Hungary. And certainly the political world changed forever when Britain invaded Egypt, a disaster that led to the resignation of the Prime Minister. Music-wise, things were equally due for reconstruction; Elvis Presley's Heartbreak Hotel in the UK and Bill Haley's remarkable chart dominance giving the boot to parent-pop that same year. The arrival of skiffle would provide even more impact with Liverpool's Quarrymen including a 15-year-old John Lennon. Cinema, theatre, sport and sex – all received major facelifts, which are engagingly documented by the book's brace of authors, who don't miss a facet with their intriguing history lesson. Certainly 1956 changed things for David. He eventually became a full-time politician – Father Of The House, in fact.

Fred Dellar

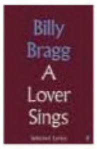
A Lover Sings: Selected Lyrics

★★★★

Billy Bragg

FABER & FABER. £14.99

The Bard of Barking, in his own words.



Those who never acquired a taste for his voice might consider reading Billy Bragg's lyrics preferable to hearing him sing them. Perhaps Bragg himself could empathise; at times during his 30-year recording career he's bridled at the notion of being a protest singer, and sought respite in the politics of love, from whence leapt arguably his greatest song, Levi Stubbs' Tears. There's ample evidence amid these 79 lyrics that Bragg is happiest applying humour to sweeten his dual vanguard of polemic and humanism – as Waiting For The Great Leap Forwards acknowledges, "In a perfect world we'd all sing in tune/But this is reality so give me some room". With the author's annotations providing historical context and clarity, this book reveals a very English writer: diligent and incorrigibly romantic, who like a true West Ham United fan always glimpses hope amid the rain.

Keith Cameron

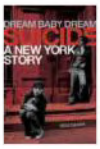
Dream Baby Dream: Suicide – A New York Story

★★★★

Kris Needs

OMNIBUS PRESS. £19.95

Compelling account based on original interviews with Alan Vega and Martin Rev.



Author Kris Needs lived in the city in the 1980s, and so the backstory to this most New York of groups is explored in great detail. Vega and Rev both grew up with rock'n'roll and doo wop. The former became a sculptor, who never considered himself a musician until a 1969 Iggy & The Stooges show gave him the idea of total performance. Rev, meanwhile, was a promising jazz pianist, while also embracing the musical avant-garde. This radical voyage of discovery reads almost like a novel, with the excitement levels rising as they form Suicide in 1970, performing their self-styled "Punk Music" partly as a comment on the Vietnam War. Some hated their confrontational, noise-based sets, while others were left stunned, but Vega was physically attacked by poet Allen Ginsberg for using the name 'Suicide'. Needs goes on to chart the course of this most uncompromising and unlikely of careers right up to this year's concert at the London Barbican.

Mike Barnes

Fortunate Son

★★★★

John Fogerty

LITTLE, BROWN. £22.99

Betrayal forms the backbone of this harrowing autobiography.

FORTUNATE SON
JOHN FOGERTY

Most fans only know the outlines of the Creedence czar's accusations against his first record company (Fantasy), which centre on its Judas-like chief, the late Saul Zaentz, or the enmity between Fogerty and his three bandmates (including, sadly, his deceased brother Tom). But never before has Fogerty detailed the hair-raising range of double-crosses and legal tricks which turned him bitter enough to refuse to play his best-loved songs for over 20 years, from the '70s to the '90s. Fogerty's juiciest target is bassist Stu Cook, whom he demonises as both greedy and delusional. In telling his tale, Fogerty can come off as bullheaded and vengeful. But he's also sweet in his worship of music and of the transformative powers of his wife Julie. He even admits that a revival of the original Creedence isn't out of the question.

Jim Farber

The Zapple Diaries: The Rise And Fall Of The Last Beatles Label

★★★★

Barry Miles

PETER OWEN. £16.99

The story of how The Beatles bankrolled the Beats before the Klein kibosh.

The Zapple Diaries

If the last word on The Beatles is yet to be written, you'll probably find it in the index as Zapple. One of several enterprises launched under the Apple umbrella, it was the brainchild of bibliophile, mentor, scenester and now chronicler of the London '60s underground, Barry Miles. A label dedicated to spreading the spoken word, especially American poetry ranging from Charles Olson to beat guru Allen Ginsberg, as well as sundry freaky sounds that spiced the countercultural buffet, Zapple had barely got started before the villainous Allen Klein pulled the plug. Though a Fabs insider, Miles does not shrink from portraying Apple-era Paul as a spiteful bully, John and George as no less arrogant and hugely entitled to boot; yet they could also be warm, generous and thoughtful idealists. But the show belongs to the supporting cast, with vignettes starring Ur-hipster Charleses Mingus and Bukowski particularly choice. Great photos too.

Mat Snow

Petty: The Biography

★★★★

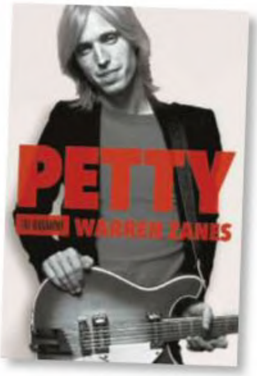
Warren Zanes

HENRY HOLT. £20

Intimate account of the US's beloved 'everyman' rocker, by musician-turned-author Zanes.

Already the subject of several books as well as director Peter Bogdanovich's exhaustive four-hour documentary, it would seem there's little left to turn over in the tale of Tom Petty. And yet this nimbly written bio by the former Del Fuegos guitarist proves that what's previously been presented was a somewhat sanitised version of the story. Petty comes across as far more complicated than his populist roots rocker and music industry gadfly image ever suggested. Given that Zanes' relationship with Petty dates back a quarter of a century, Petty is unusually candid, stripping away layers of his own psyche to discuss a fraught relationship with his father, a troubled first marriage, the firings of his Heartbreakers bandmates, as well as his own heroin addiction. Despite the access, Zanes hasn't turned out a work of hagiography. All the key players interviewed prove equally frank in their assessments of Petty, who comes off as driven, callous and admirable all at once. A surprisingly compelling portrait.

Bob Mehr



'Z' is for Zapple.
Miller High Life
Hamm's
Cools
Olympia

Say the word: (clockwise from top left) Allen Ginsberg; John Lennon blesses Derek Taylor as Paul McCartney (second left) looks on; Charles Bukowski gets comfy; Zapple announced.

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Who was that masked man?

A stranger tale from the rock'n'roll universe. By David Hutcheon.

Orion – The Man Who Would Be King

★★★★

Dir: Jeanie Finlay

CREATIVE ENGLAND/FFILM CYMRU/BBC STORYVILLE. C/TV

With his death, Elvis Presley, once the greatest star in the firmament, finally became so untouchable his fans' need to be in his presence surpassed the capabilities of every Lake Tahoe ballroom and Pine Bluff Convention Centre. Demand for any Elvis experience exploded in a way not even the Valentino fans who turned their idol's funeral into a circus could understand, and Jeanie Finlay's masterful documentary tells the story of one man who would come to understand for himself why the King had appeared such a disillusioned and sad figure towards the end of his life.

With grief spilling over into spectacular record sales, Shelby Singleton, the owner of the Sun label, and a man to whom the word "scrupulous" was only ever mistakenly applied, issued the *Duets* album – this writer will admit to being in the queue to buy it in 1978 – featuring old Jerry Lee Lewis tracks to which had been added ("and friends") the mysteriously uncredited but Elvis-like Orion (aka Jimmy Ellis).

Keen readers would know that Orion was a fictional character, created by the novelist Gail Brewer Giorgio in 1977, a rock superstar who faked his own death, but nobody had the courage to definitively claim the singer on the album – who didn't sound much like Elvis – wasn't the real thing. Borrowing Giorgio's concept to a shameful degree, Singleton launched Ellis on a ravenous world with the album *Reborn*.

Finlay, who made the moving Sound It Out, about the last record shop in Teesside, inverts the life-affirming beauty of that film and uncovers a bizarre story that makes rock'n'roll feel like the grubbiest industry imaginable. Wearing a bandit's mask – the least dignified aspect of this tale – Ellis toured and recorded incessantly for several years, generating barrow-loads of cash for somebody and sowing the seeds of his own misery. He had been a successful horse trainer and had no burning desire to be either Presley or an Elvis impersonator – though the amount of sex he was getting seemed to keep him on the road almost as much as the unbreakable contract he had signed with Singleton.

Stars in his eyes: caped rocker Orion, aka Jimmy Ellis, hunting those Elvis moves.

Just as the film appears to have run its course, however, Finlay finds another level. Ellis may not have looked much like Elvis, but he did bear a striking resemblance to … no, no spoilers. As long as the mask stayed in place, he was Orion; why take it off and risk becoming no-mark Jimmy Ellis again? Not even The National Enquirer, camped in the bushes outside his home, could catch him unmasked at the peak of his fame. Until RCA's marketing team got its act together, songs such as Look Me Up (And Lay It On Me) or The Games You've Been Playing were the nearest thing fans could get to new Presley material; why break the spell by recording I'm Not Trying To Be Like Elvis? Oh, but he did. You don't need to have degree in Great American Tragedies to know Ellis's story is not going to end happily.

> "THE AMOUNT OF SEX HE WAS GETTING SEEMED TO KEEP HIM ON THE ROAD."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Fans could write to Orion at his grand house, Dixieland, in the fictional Ribbonsville, Tennessee.
- Between 1979 and 1984, he released nine albums.
- At one point his fan club claimed it had 400,000 members.
- Debut album *Reborn* had to be recalled because of a tasteless sleeve that showed the singer climbing out of an open casket.
- The Jerry Lee Lewis "and friends" single Save The Last Dance For Me made Number 26 in the US country charts.
- The man in the mask once tried to expand his fan base by touring with Kiss.

Mr Dynamite: The Rise Of James Brown

★★★★★

UMC. DVD/BR

The definitive story of Soul Brother Number 1.

MR DYNAMITE

"Soul is when a man has to struggle to be equal," says The Godfather Of Soul James Brown in this remarkable documentary by director Alex Gibney. After Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, riots broke out all over the not-so-United States and the singer personally defused a hair-trigger situation in Boston by insisting on performing in town that night and broadcasting the show on live television. "They respected him," explains his drummer Clyde Stubblefield, speaking for the black community. And while American racism – and one man's ability to overcome it – is a crucial subtext, director Gibney wisely focuses on the music and interviews everyone from saxophonist/bandleader Pee Wee Ellis to eager-to-learn supplicant Mick Jagger (the film's co-producer), minimising personal soap operatics. Ellis breaks down how he took Brown's grunts and turned them into the bassline for Cold Sweat and got the song's horn chart from Miles Davis's So What. Music documentaries rarely get hipper than that.

Michael Simmons

Tubby Hayes: A Man In A Hurry

★★★

MONO MEDIA. DVD

Affectionate look at a British jazz genius.

It's a jaded, worn-out cliché but the description "he lived fast and died young" pretty well summed up this London-born musician's relatively short life. A teenage saxophone prodigy who was playing professionally while still in school, Hayes, according to Martin Freeman's narration on Mark Baxter and Lee Cogswell's film, "burned the candle at both ends and then started on the middle." Prodigiously talented (he could play flute and vibraphone as well as sax) he was also a man of enormous appetites – for food (hence his 'Tubby' moniker), booze, drugs and women. His story is told via various talking head contributors including Hayes's biographer Simon Spillett, style guru Robert Elms and London jazz mafiosi Eddie Piller and Dean Rudland. Their commentary, together with rare footage of Hayes's TV and movie performances, helps to etch a fascinating portrait of arguably the greatest jazz musician the UK has produced.

Charles Waring

Jimi Hendrix Experience: Electric Church

★★★

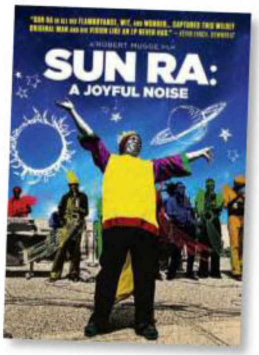
LEGACY. DVD/BR

Hendrix near the end but still on top.

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE
ELECTRIC CHURCH

Rock-fest films suffer from re-runitis: overcrowding, dope, nudity, coppers, choppers, et al. And so it is with Electric Church by director John McDermott. On the evening of July 4, 1970, Jimi Hendrix played the Atlanta Pop Festival. Once Hendrix hits the stage, however, he is musically transcendent and the clichés immaterial. "There's a persona, but no BS," notes talking head Derek Trucks - a stark difference twixt arena-rock then and now. Despite Jimi's famous theatrics, by 1970 he was literally carrying the moment in his hands via his guitar, yet to be bested 45 years later. We get the familiar, from Purple Haze to Star Spangled Banner with date-appropriate fireworks creating sparkling visuals. Yet compared to earlier concerts, he looks unhappy. His mood isn't noted by anyone here – is it me? We do know that two months later he was gone and that he is still sorely missed.

Michael Simmons



Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise

★★★

MVD. DVD

Bemusing Arkestra snapshot from 1980, with riveting live footage.

Film-maker Robert Mugge spent two years embedded in Sun Ra's Arkestra, yielding this highly enjoyable hour-long portrait, first screened in 1980. The film centres on wildly extreme Arkestra performances enacted in Philadelphia and Baltimore, interspersed with semi-lucid vignettes in which Ra tries to explain his cosmology and general worldview. Band members attest to Ra's leadership qualities, which stimulate their uncommon loyalty despite 24-hour rehearsals that might begin at 4am. Ra's message is basically that human beings have failed to create anything of meaning, which is why he has arrived from outer space, using his music to reconnect humanity with the Creator; shocking alto sax shrieks from Marshall Allen, the mesmerising vocals of June Tyson and mutant synth bashing from Ra himself all aid the purpose. Outstanding moments include a loping extended jam of Along Came Ra/The Living Myth, delivered on a rooftop, and a fluid version of Calling Planet Earth.

David Katz

Between Dog And Wolf: The New Model Army Story

★★★★

CADIZ MUSIC. DVD

Uplifting rags-to-more-rags tale of the cult-like post-punks.

DOG AND WOLF

From Stranglers/Skids-esque beginnings to becoming outliers of the anthemic, ragged and romantic rock song, NMA's story of guts and glory is seamlessly told by director Matt Reid. A mouthpiece for '80s anger, yet often critically derided, frontman Justin Sullivan appears today as an intelligent and jovial leader of an international tribe who still have a penchant for Calderdale-made clogs. An appearance on The Tube in 1984, where they were introduced as "the ugliest band around", and a thrilling TOTP slot shot entirely live with Sullivan sporting a 'Only Stupid Bastards Use Heroin' T-shirt saw mainstream in-roads made. The Times even made 1986's *The Ghost Of Cain* as their LP of the year. But uncompromising outsiders they remain – Sullivan blew their EMI deal – and producer Glyn Johns, Phill Jupitus, and art director/muse Joolz Denby all provide valuable insight. Their place in Britain's rich tradition of rootsy dissidence, from Cromwell to Crass, is well acknowledged.

Ben Myers

Queen: A Night At The Odeon – Hammersmith 1975

★★★★★

VIRGIN EMI. DVD/BR

A classic from their early reign, beautifully restored. Extras include May '75 Japan live footage.

Broadcast live on Radio 1 and BBC2's Old Grey Whistle Test, the group's stunning Hammy Odeon shindig saw the stars align on Christmas Eve, 1975. "Bo-Rhap" as Whispering Bob calls it, horribly, in a new extras chat with May and Taylor, had begun its nine-week run at Number 1. *A Night At The Opera* would soon top the albums chart, and Queen became what May calls "stopped in the street"-famous overnight. Amazingly, each of them was still on £20 a week. All cheekbones, eyeliner and satin, Freddie was never more appealingly outlandish and unabashedly theatrical than here, hamming-up his hand-crossing arpeggios on Bo Rhap and leading the charge on truly breathtaking versions of Liar and In The Lap Of The Gods. You might just shed a tear.

James McNair

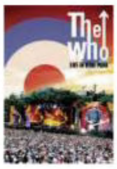
The Who

★★★★

Live In Hyde Park

EAGLE VISION. DVD/BR

Britrock die-hards' mammoth 50th anniversary hometown show.



The Who's Summer 2015 Hyde Park concert preceded their headline slot at Glastonbury. 'The Two' arrive on-stage with the resigned look of men tasked with digging a very big hole; Roger Daltrey even carries a mug of tea. Then Pete Townshend glowers at the 50,000-strong crowd, declares, "You are a long way away… but we will *fucking* reach you" – and we're off. It takes time to get used to The Who's tambourine-shaking keyboard players, but then it takes a lot to replace John Entwistle. Pop-art roundels explode on the screens as they rip into I Can See For Miles and My Generation, intercut with soundbites from admirers, Johnny Marr, Paul Weller and Iggy Pop. The *Quadrophenia* ballad I'm One is a marvel; a weary Love Reign O'er Me isn't. But by the time Won't Get Fooled Again's final powerchord fades into the Kensington night air, Townshend has certainly fulfilled his promise.

Mark Blake

They can see for miles: The Who's Pete Townshend (above right) and Roger Daltrey (left) reach out.

Fabrice Demessence

The new black

Hello, I'm Jason Isbell. We meet country music's authentic new standard-bearer in Nashville. By Andy Fyfe.

Jason Isbell

Ryman Auditorium, Nashville

No matter what thrills past and future there will be in Jason Isbell's career, there surely won't be many comparable to getting a standing ovation at this famous former home of the Grand Ole Opry simply for walking onto the stage.

Isbell is country's coming man. His latest album, *Something More Than Free*, not only beat megastar Alan Jackson to Number 1 on the Billboard country chart, it did so with enough genre-bending skill to also top the folk, rock and independent charts, and hit Number 6 on the Top 200. It even made the UK Top 20. Really, it's hard to fully comprehend just what an achievement this has been for someone on a relatively small Nashville independent label who doesn't play straight radio-friendly country, but it helps explain why Isbell is also the first-ever artist to sell out four consecutive nights at the Ryman. It's not, as his label boss (and Grammy-winning producer) David Macias readily admits, that others *couldn't* sell those nights. Van Morrison or Bruce Springsteen could do it, but even Mumford & Sons only booked three.

So when Isbell walks out on-stage dressed entirely in black – a cross between Johnny Cash and post-GI Elvis Presley – it's not just as a newly anointed star. He's also a symbol of the resurgence country in its broadest sense is making, from a genre shallowly obsessed with radio into a modern, credible art form on such an upswing that Rolling Stone recently felt compelled to publish a list of Nashville's top movers and shakers.

At 36 the Alabama native is an unlikely 'breakthrough' artist. Isbell has been on the Americana radar since joining Drive-By Truckers as a tour guitarist at 21, where in a band already overcrowded with songwriters he quickly became their most interesting voice, writing the title track for *Decoration Day*, the first album he recorded with them. It's a song he still performs, about a violent family feud.

Novelistic rather than autobiographical, as much as any song it displays even the younger Isbell's rare ability to set a scene in two lines where more authorly types might take pages. That writing style courses through Isbell's compositions, right up to tonight's centrepiece from his latest album, the epic Children Of Children, full of Neil Youngesque sustained twiddles on minor chords and cannon-fire snare. In this instance it is autobiographical, Isbell the first in five generations of his family to reach his twenties without having kids: "I was riding on my mother's hip/She was shorter than the corn/And all the years I took from her/Just for being born."

The real difference between the Isbell of these two songs is his own performance. Even two years ago, touring *Something More Than Free*'s companion album *Southeastern*, Isbell seemed less than comfortable up front, in part due to the rawness of his newfound sobriety. Now, with the tail wind only a Number 1 album can provide, he almost casually drops his shoulder into breathtaking slide solos on Children… and 24 Frames that belie the hesitancy shown mere months ago.

Such is the charisma of Isbell 2.0 that his five-piece backing band all but disappear on the stage in spite of their boss's frequent props. The one exception is his fiddle player, Amanda Shires, also his wife, mother of their two-month-old daughter and the woman who got him sober. To her he directly sings Cover Me Up ("But I sobered up and I swore off that stuff … home was a dream, one I'd never seen, 'til you came along"). Personal the lyrics may be, but they hit a universal chord that causes the biggest of seemingly endless cheers tonight, many in the crowd inappropriately toasting them with a beer. They whoop like contestants at a pig holler with every mention of soldiers, towns, states or anything that could be possibly construed as overcoming adversity.

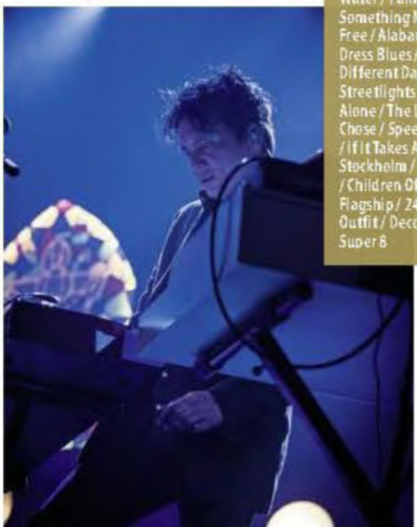
The rock element so carefully controlled throughout *Southeastern* and …*Free* tumbles freely from the band all night. From the air-punching heartland rock of Palmetto Rose and Flying Over Water, taproom swing of Codeine and the closing boogie groove of Super 8 – as bluesy as the Stones' Sway with which Isbell often encores – they rock with a finesse that only the greats possess.

Big-selling country music long ago stepped away from the grassroots dignity and humility that made Gram Parsons claim the likes of Hank Williams, George Jones and Johnny Cash as "white man's soul music". Maybe two exceptional albums doesn't quite yet qualify Isbell as the new Man In Black, but tonight, in this former tabernacle, country has discovered an artist everyone can truly believe in.

"COUNTRY MUSIC HAS DISCOVERED AN ARTIST EVERYONE CAN TRULY BELIEVE IN."

Home was a dream: Jason Isbell (right) in residence at the Ryman; (bottom, from left) Amanda Shires, violinist, sobriety advisor, wife, mother; guitarist Sadler Vaden and bassist Jimbo Hart; Jason hits universal chord; keyboardist Derry deBorja; Isbell out front.

Eric England (6)



SETLIST

Seven-Mile Island / Go It Alone / Flying Over Water / Palmetto Rose / Something More Than Free / Alabama Pines / Dress Blues / Codeine / Different Days / Streetlights / Traveling Alone / The Life You Chose / Speed Trap Town / If It Takes A Lifetime / Stockholm / Cover Me Up / Children Of Children / Flagship / 24 Frames / Outfit / Decoration Day / Super 8

The man machine

Electropop pioneer revisits chart-topping late-'70s trilogy. By Andy Cowan.

Gary Numan

Forum, London

There was no road map when Gary Numan became the first bona fide electronic pop star. The steady seven-week climb of Tubeway Army's discretely alien Are 'Friends' Electric? to Number 1 snowballed into a sustained bout of testy critical hand-wringing when, just five months later, Numan did it all over again, solo, with Cars.

The middle of three consecutive Forum shows dedicates its first half to *The Pleasure Principle*, the album that lit synth-pop's blue touchpaper and smashed open the barricades for Human League, Depeche Mode et al to follow. While its predecessor *Replicas* married hired-by-the-hour Moogs with crunchy guitar bar chords, Numan jettisoned six strings altogether in an inverse of Queen's "No synthesizers!" sleeve boasts, adding harmonic heft by processing his battery of machines with extensive reverb, flange and phase.

Tonight the out-of-tune piano plink-plonking of Cars B-side Asylum heralds his band's arrival. A raven-haired Numan, splendidly framed within a pentagram of lasers, takes a small bow as driving instrumental Airlane sets the tone to warm nods from diehard Numanoids. The album's tightrope-walking twist of commerciality, the avant-garde and paranoid-android lyrics is particularly well drilled on live staples Cars and Metal, their staccato bass riffs doubled up on guitar for greater impact.

More striking still is the earthy physicality of its bedrock. Not only did the muscular funky drumming of the late Cedric Sharpley, perfectly replicated by Richard Beasley here, add necessary warmth to the ice cool robotics, it was the principal reason an army of Zulu Nation b-boys breakdanced a storm to the album across New York's South Bronx, cheer-led by burly electro pioneer Afrika Bambaataa (he regarded Numan as a game-changer).

Synthetic aesthetics: Gary Numan on the second of a three-night stand in London.

Although Numan shuffles the pack slightly so *The Pleasure Principle* ends with singles Complex and Cars, the short album is barely distended here. There's a palpable shift in anticipation when the band launch into *Replicas'* Down In The Park and Me! I Disconnect From You, the remarkably well-preserved Numan thrashing about, head-banging and throwing balletic dying swan poses like an enthusiastic new jack.

Proof that *The Pleasure Principle* didn't strike the death knell for guitars arrives with a quartet of rockier offerings from 1980's *Telekon* era, a wry Numan grinning Cheshire cat-like throughout Remind Me To Smile and its disgusted nouveau fame recrimination: "This is detention/It's not fun at all." The house effectively comes down with Are 'Friends' Electric?, long transformed on-stage into a fist-pumping, crowd-friendly terrace anthem, Numan tweaking its final spoken line to: "This means everything to me!" For the encore he goes back further still, strapping on his treasured Gibson Les Paul for squelching runs through Tubeway Army's Friends and the proto-machine rock My Shadow In Vain.

When this writer first encountered Numan on The Touring Principle in 1979 he was a hesitant performer, the stiffness of his mirror-practised shape throwing spared by elaborate stage lighting. He still has a penchant for powerful pyrotechnics, but synth-pop's original whipping boy has metamorphosed into a truly consummate showman. This victory lap is the living proof.

"NUMAN HEAD-BANGING, AND THROWING BALLETIC DYING SWAN POSES."

SETLIST
Airlane / Metal / Films / M.E. / Tracks / Observer / Conversation / Engineers / Complex / Cars / Down In The Park / Me! I Disconnect From You / I'm An Agent / We Are Glass / Remind Me To Smile / Are 'Friends' Electric? / I Die: You Die / Friends / My Shadow In Vain

Simon Fernandez (3)

THUNDER

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

TERRORVISION

KING KING

FEBRUARY 2016

MON	15	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
TUE	16	BRISTOL COLSTON HALL
THU	18	GLASGOW CLYDE AUDITORIUM
FRI	19	SHEFFIELD ARENA
SAT	20	LONDON THE SSE ARENA WEMBLEY

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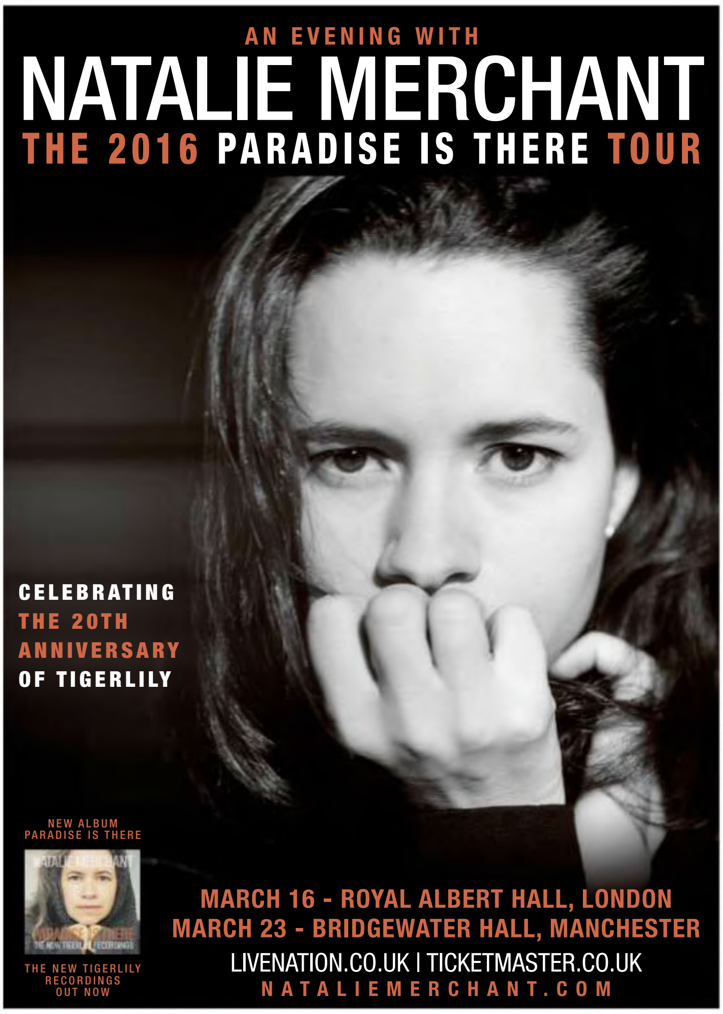

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MON	08	GATESHEAD SAGE
TUE	09	PORTSMOUTH NEW THEATRE ROYAL
THU	11	BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
SAT	13	LONDON PALLADIUM

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A LIVE NATION PRESENTATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ITB

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

THE SHEEPDOGS

JANUARY 2016

SAT	16	PORTSMOUTH PYRAMIDS CENTRE
SUN	17	NORWICH UEA
TUE	19	ABERDEEN BEACH BALLROOM
WED	20	GLASGOW BARROWLAND
THU	21	NEWCASTLE O_2 ACADEMY
FRI	22	LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
SUN	24	MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
MON	25	BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
TUE	26	CARDIFF Y PLAS
WED	27	LONDON O_2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

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BRIAN FALLON

& the Crowes

APRIL 2016

TUE 5 MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
WED 6 GLASGOW O_2 ABC
THU 7 BIRMINGHAM O_2 INSTITUTE
FRI 8 LONDON KOKO
SAT 9 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
SUN 10 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY

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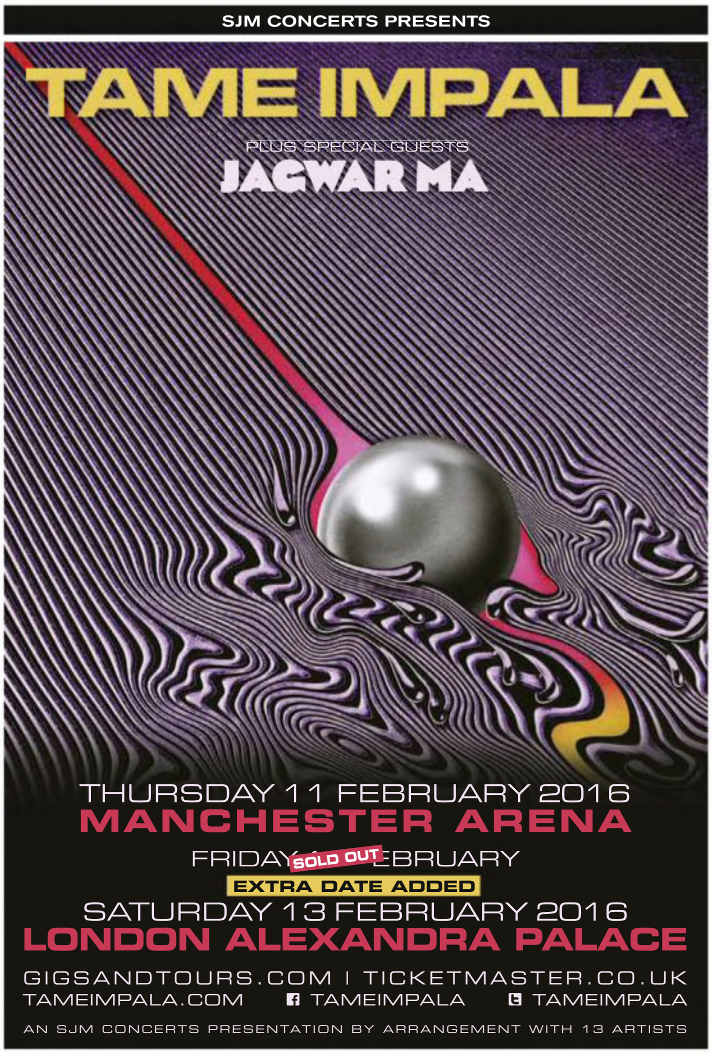

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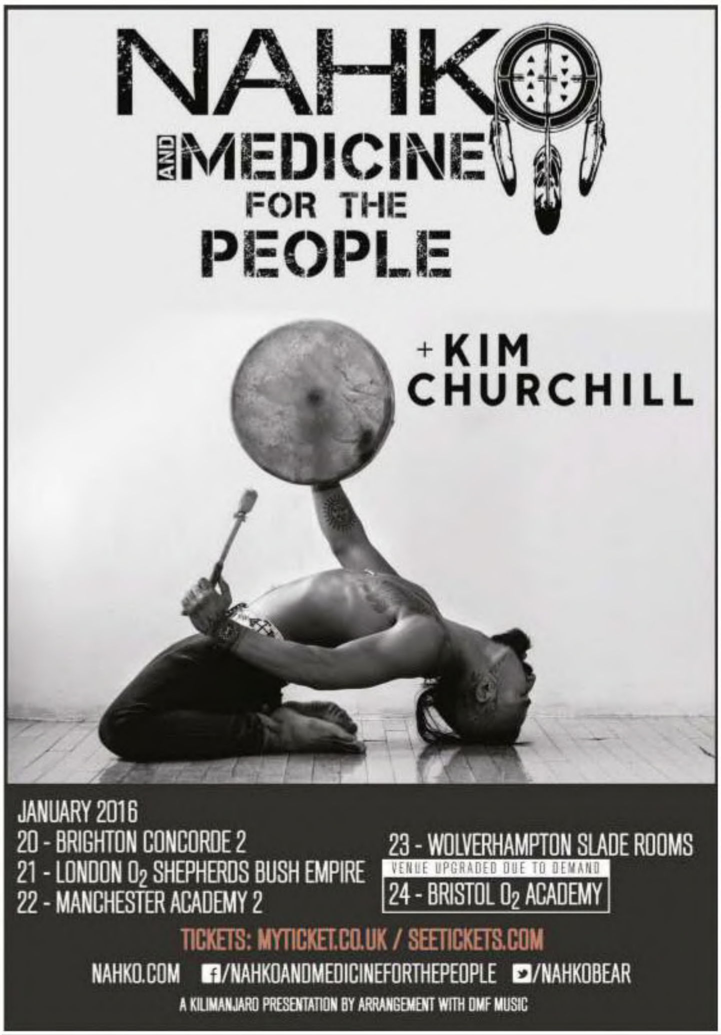
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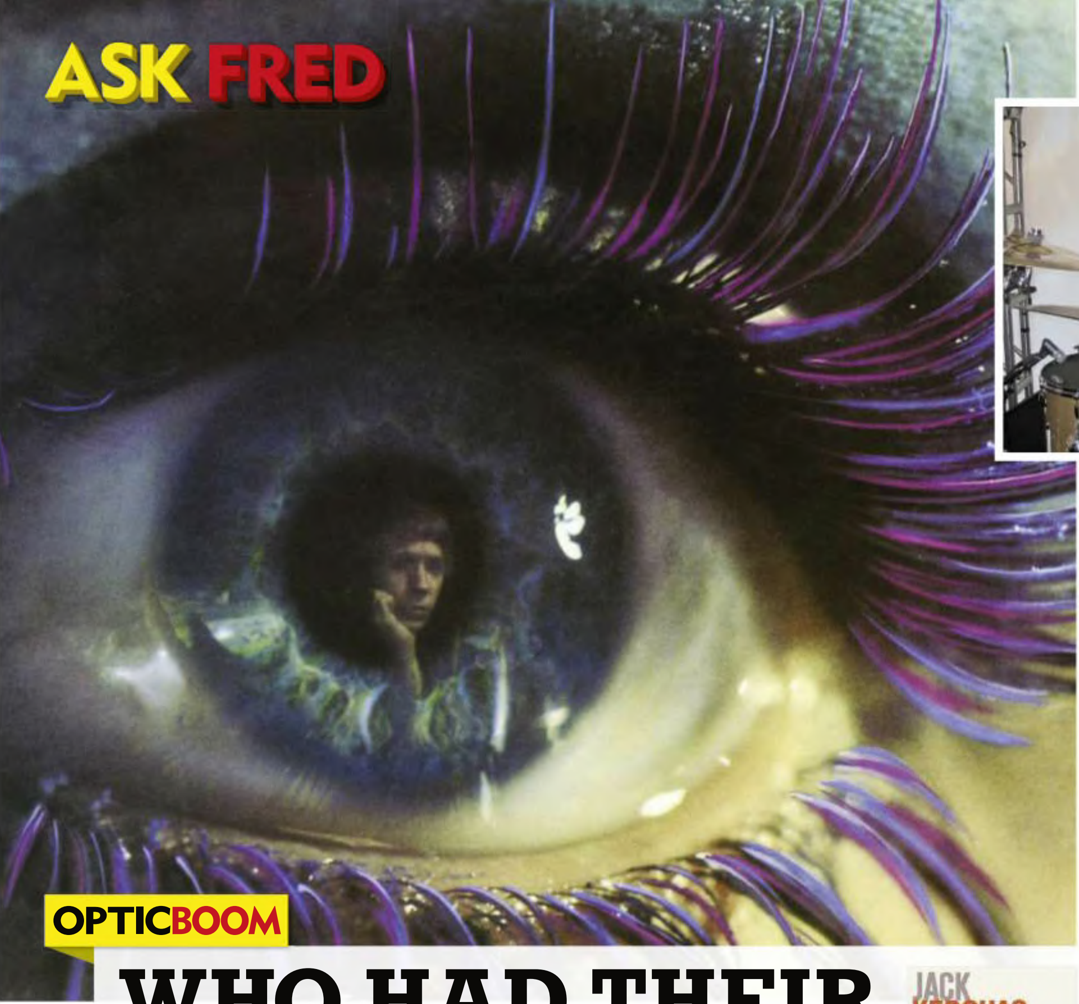


OPTICBOOM

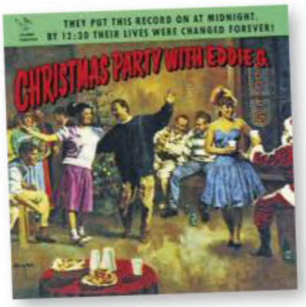
WHO HAD THEIR EYE ON SCOTT?

Tired of dwelling on placid islands of ignorance amid black seas of infinity? Dellar's here to illuminate!

Who is the lady in whose eye Scott Walker is reflected on the sleeve of [1969 album] *Scott 3*. I asked Keith Altham, who wrote the sleevenote, but even he doesn't know.

Lyndon Morgans, via e-mail

Fred says: I'd heard several conflicting answers – one suggested it was Scott himself! So I checked with the owner of the site at www.philipsrecords.co.uk who worked with Scott's producer, Johnny Franz, at the label. He claimed: "My first thought was that the heavily mascara'd lady on *Scott 3* was any one of the array of models who featured on Philips' budget labels (Contour etc). But I recently heard from one-time record promotion man Barry Holt, who says, 'It was my girlfriend, Pamela McCarthy, an aspiring model from Manchester. I remember going to Blinkers in Manchester, where Pam gave a demonstration of the latest dance moves together with a display of London fashion. George Best was in attendance.' However, Pam's life ended tragically, killed in a plane crash in 1972." Some of Pamela's magazine covers are at tinyurl.com/nb4xonk. Holt, responsible for promoting David Bowie and Lou Reed, now lives in Spain and is writing a book about his life in the record business.


THEY PUT THIS RECORD ON AT MIDNIGHT. BY 12:30 THEIR LIVES WERE CHANGED FOREVER!
CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH EDDIE G.

DYLAN'S MR G FOUND?

Further to the discussion in MOJO 263, Bob Dylan did indeed have his own imprint – Strikin' It Rich, distributed by Columbia. The only release seems to be *Christmas Party With Eddie G.* released in 1990. This much is known from the linernotes: he's no relation to Kenny G, he's an Emmy award winner, and he had been making Christmas-related tapes for his friends for several years before this one.

George Kaplan, New York, NY

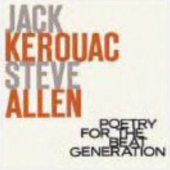
Fred says: It seems the mysterious Eddie G is Eddie Gorodetsky, writer for US TV shows Dharma & Greg, Saturday Night Live, the animated Batman series and more. He's also made various Christmas mix tapes and – here's the big link – been producer of Dylan's Theme Time Radio Hour series! *Christmas Party With…* follows the show's multi-genre format, the 20 tracks including Foghat's All I Want For Christmas Is You, George Jones & Tammy Wynette's Mr And Mrs Santa Claus and Louis Prima's What Will Santa Claus Say? (When He Finds Everyone Swingin').

WAS THRICE-NAMED DRUMMER A BUDDY?

Is it true that Gary Busey, who so convincingly portrayed the star in the Buddy Holly Story bio-flick, was once a drummer?

Phil Reed, Norwich

Fred says: Oscar-nominee Busey has an alter ego as drummer Teddy Jack Eddy, and has appeared on dates with Kris Kristofferson, Leon Russell and Willie Nelson. By coincidence, Busey was once cast to play a drummer with Holly's band The Crickets in an earlier film project called Not Fade Away, though this idea was ditched due to legal problems.


JACK KEROUAC
STEVE ALLEN
POETRY FOR THE BEAT GENERATION

Voices from a photograph: (clockwise from main) the sleeve of Scott Walker's 1969 LP *Scott 3*, with the singer reflected in the eye of Pamela McCarthy; Gary Busey on drums; Sufjan Stevens on banjo; Dylan's Xmas release; super-rare jazz wax.

UP THE POLES!

It seems your column was created in the '60s or '70s, when newspapers were alpha and omega for rock lovers. But your piece about Iron Curtain gigs forgot to mention Poland. The Rolling Stones performed a show in communist Warsaw on April 13, 1967. Great day! Great show! There are many urban legends and extremely funny stories connected with this gig but one thing is certain – it happened!

Micheal Majczak, Warsaw, Poland

Fred says: Sorry about that, Micheal. Since receiving your e-mail I've realised there's a book devoted to the Stones' two back-to-back Warsaw gigs, Marcin Jacobson's The Rolling Stones – Warszawa '67, which tries to clarify many of the myths about Jagger & co's visit to Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science, including the one that says they got a wagon of vodka in payment for the show.

WHO PROVIDED THE RAREST OF RIFFS?

What is the rarest jazz album?

Trevor Forbes, via e-mail

Fred says: According to the Goldmine Jazz Album Price Guide, the rarest jazz release is the original vinyl version of *Poetry For The Beat Generation*, released on Dot in 1959. On the album, Jack Kerouac reads poetry accompanied by pianist (and TV host) Steve Allen, but Dot president Randy Wood stopped the presses after deciding some of Kerouac's material was in bad taste. "This record will never be released by Dot," he declared, and ordered all copies to be scrapped. However, around 130 copies had already been sent to reviewers and several survived, and a VG-condition copy fetched $10,000 at a US auction. The album has since seen various reissues, but that Dot original pleases bank managers the most.

WHO'S EUGENE?

On Sufjan Stevens' latest album, *Carrie & Lowell*, there's a track titled Eugene. Who is or was Eugene?

C.E. Stone, via e-mail

Fred says: Eugene is the city in Oregon where Sufjan Stevens spent many childhood moments with his mother (Carrie) and stepfather (Lowell). Tim Hardin was also born and raised there. A current resident is Mason Williams, composer of Classical Gas and Cinderella Rockefella.

CONTACTFRED

Write to: Ask Fred, MOJO, Endeavour House, 189 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JG.

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For info visit http://www.tibo-electronics.com/

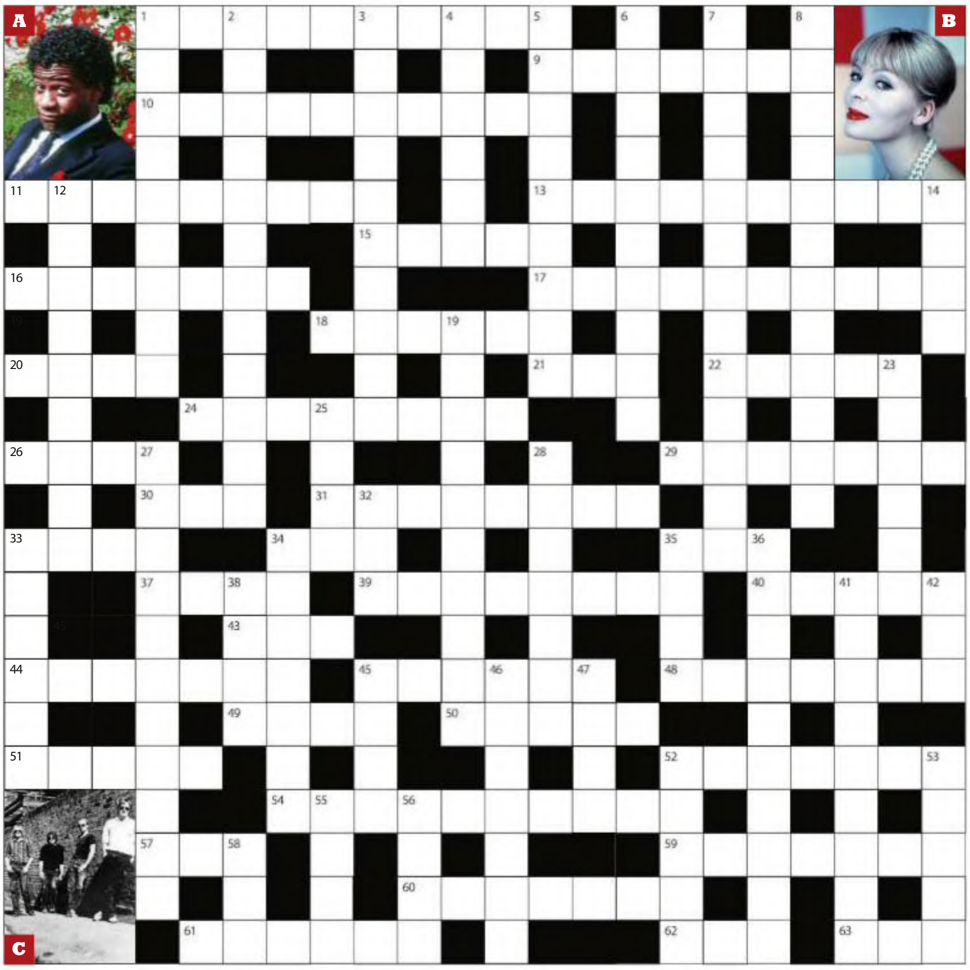
ANSWERS

MOJO 264

Across: 1 Willie Nelson, 7/14 Ram It Down, 10 Late Registration, 11 Dr.John, 13 Rooms on Fire, 16 Guilty, 17 Da Hool, 19 *Us And Us*, 20 *Astral Weeks*, 21 *Burnin'* 23 Duran Duran, 26 Reznor, 28 Mekons, 29 Eli, 31 Hooker, 32 Chips Moman, 35 Low, 37 Awake, 40 *Blonde On Blonde*, 42 Regal, 43 M Beat, 44 Of Man, 45 Epic, 47 Span, 48 *Keg*, 49 Centre, 52/62 Lipps, Inc., 54 DI.S.C.O., 55 Amy, 58 *Ether*, 61 *Mirage*, 63 Aura, 64 Vig, 65 Oldie, 66/67 Scissor Sisters.

Down: 1 Wilko Johnson, 2 *Let England Shake*, 3 I Predict A Riot, 4 Night Train, 5 Laser, 6 Our House, 8 A Town Called Malice, 9 Otis Rush, 12 Rea, 15 Easter, 17 Dub, 18 Awful, 22 Ure, 24 Der Kommissar, 25 Rick Danko, 27 Ora, 28 Melle Mel, 30 *Open*, 33 Minuet, 34 Needle, 36 Wake Up, 38 Art, 39 Egyptians, 40 Blondie, 41 Omega, 46 Icy, 50 *Net*, 51 Roe, 53 PFM, 56 Movie, 57 Rats, 58 *Egos*, 59 Hide, 60 Reed.

Winner: **Madan Virdee** of **Birmingham** wins a Rega Queen branded turntable and *Queen: The Studio Collection* vinyl box set.



Rex (2), Getty Images

ACROSS

1 Founder of the Lubbock Sound (5,5)
9 1990s Scottish electronic trio fronted by singer Dot Allison (3,4)
10 Mansun's 1998 female feeling (5,1,4)
11 Elvis Presley's loss of muscle power (9)
13 She's pretty but reformed to provide those *Little Victories* album maker (3,7)
15 Steve – mainly fearless (5)
16 Ian Carr's ioneering jazz-rockers (7)
17 King Crimson's evening activity LP (10)
18 Your Love -- ---- (Sade) (2,4)
20 Pet Shop Boys' album that contains I Wouldn't Normally Do This Kind Of Thing (4)
21 Skip Spence's only solo album (3)
22 Bernstein but not Leonard (5)
24 Liam Gallagher's optic rockers (5,3)
26 Garden for Everything But The Girl (4)
29 See photoclue A (2,5)
30 Ronnie James Dio's blues-rockers (3)
31 The Sex Pistols renamed it God Save The Queen (2,6)
33 Roy's upset about Aphex Twin LP (4)
34 Initially Zang Tuum Tumb (1.1.1.)
35 The Spin Doctors number of Princes (3)
37 See photoclue B (4)
39 Simply the best-selling LP ever (8)
40 Cooking ----, home to Billy Bragg, Alison Moyet etc. (5)
43 Did they enable Dazzle Ships to set sail from Liverpool? (1.1.1.)
44 Elbow song failed to give work (3,1,3)
45 Kind of love that proved rewarding for The Mindbenders and Phil Collins (6)
48 Record label linked with the rise of grindcore and death metal (7)
49 The Rollins Band's teller of untruths (4)
50 They linked with ragga's General Levy for an Incredible result (1-4)
51 Their albums were titled *Tweez* (1989) and *Spiderland* (1991) (5)
52 Hardly normal, this LA punk group (7)
54 Lee Morgan's snakey jazz hit (10)
57 Leonard Cohen's 2012 ideas (3)
59 Super Furry like Pink Floyd's '94 LP (7)
60 As played by Miles, Louis, etc (7)
61 Broken tiaras create a record label (6)
62 In short, Merle Haggard (3)
63 Little, and baby-sat for Carole King (3)

DOWN

1 His last album was *Uprising* (3,6)
2 Both Ian Dury and The Seahorses got stuck into home improvements? (2,2,8)
3 Kanye West's song for keen ears (5,2,3)
4 Jerry, Mike Stoller's songwriting buddy (6)
5 Hoboken band originally a duo formed by Ira Kaplan and Georgia Hubley (2,2,5)
6 Tom Waits' song for his wife, famously covered by Bruce Springsteen (6,4)
7 Queens Of The Stone Age's 'laid back' release (2,4,3,4)
8 This Special One launched The Spatial A.K.A. Orchestra (5,7)
12 How The Supernaturals pieced their 1998 album together? (1,4,1,3)
14 Needless to say, Al Stewart sang about this London area (4)
19 Where Depeche Mode were to be found in 1993? (2,4,4)
23 He believed he could fly, in 1998 (1,5)
25 Elvis's brief advice – a US Number 1 (4)
27 Box Tops hit – did they get over it? (4,7)
28 Save --- ---- (Eternal) (3,4)
32 Record producer linked with Sinéad O'Connor, Embrace and others (3)
33 See photoclue C (The, 6)
34 Rod Argent's undead from St Albans (7)
35 Absolutely correct, Spandau Ballet (4)
36 "Hey, hey, some missionary, boil at 100 degrees" (The Charlatans) (4,6)
38 "It's hard to remember how it felt before" (Gwen Stefani) (4)
41 Reformed Dr Ken Caik forecast that it'll be *Bryter Layter* (4,5)
42 Byron, he headed The Dragonaires (3)
45 The ----. Daft Punk track from the TRON Legacy soundtrack (4)
46 Completely apparent like Paul Simon's Top 10 Child (7)
47 Lee 'Scratch' Perry sent a message from here in 1989 (4)
52 Grapes Of -----, Canadian rockers (5)
53 He had an *airdrawndagger* in 2002 (5)
55 Singer-songwriter DeMent (4)
56 At last it's Ms James (4)
58 Renowned US folk singer Williams (3)

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THISMONTH

SANANDA MAITREYA AND TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY

He began by wanting to be a Beatle, selling millions and winning a Grammy. But self-discovery was looming.

Sign your name? (above) the artiste takes the hardline, 1987; (below, right) in happier mood and wardrobe, 1995; (below) Sananda Maitreya today.

HELLO SUMMER 1987

At the age of two when first hearing The Beatles, I knew that I wanted to be a Beatle. I didn't know the logistics of it, but figured that that could be figured out later along the way.

I came to London in 1986 shortly after Live Aid. I was living at the time between Frankfurt and Munich. I came to England with (most of) the songs already written for that initial project [*Introducing The Hardline According To Terence Trent D'Arby*, released July 1987]. Martyn Ware [producer] was a gift from God. I vividly recall having a meeting with master Martyn at his request at the then CBS building in Soho Square where he told me that he was the man to let me make the record that I needed to make. And he was very true to his word and was a perfect gentleman. We even dressed up every Friday in our 'good clothes' so that we would feel more upmarket, more dandy. Our rapport was natural. I could have found no better producer for the project. As for the recording itself, it was easy. We already had the blueprint and we simply executed it. It was a true blast, of what I can still remember of it.

My love for music and my faith in it and my spirit were validated, as well as the embrace of my heroes. I got to hang out with David Bowie, Pete Townshend. I got to go to a birthday party at Mick Jagger's house and George Harrison came to a party at my house. It doesn't get much cooler than that. I got to write a song inspired by one of my heroes, Rod Stewart [Holding On To You]. And I had the great honour of being befriended by Miles Davis and adopted into his fraternity. And then there was the babes! It was very exciting, as beginnings always are.

> "I WAS MUMMIFIED AND ENTOMBED AND HAD NO WAY OUT."

GOODBYE JANUARY 1995

I was promoting *Vibrator* and was mummified and entombed and had no way out except for a complete transformation and letting go, walking away from a life I no longer controlled.

The name Sananda was suggested through a series of three dreams during a period of immense emotional duress. In them, I would hear [the name] called out in the woods where I was walking. By the third dream I awakened to the understanding that Sananda was *me*.

The industry and others did what they felt expedient not to allow this information to be made known or taken seriously. [His manager and record company] were as unresponsive then as they would probably be now. For them the act of taking my life back was an act of war. I do recall calling and faxing friends that from the first of that year, they were to refer to me as I am currently addressed. Naturally, a few friends thought me completely nutters, though, this being California, more than a few were immediately indulgent and supportive. It has been a pain in the ass at times but my life before was a pain anyway, and a greater one.

As far as the effect on my creativity, it was immediate. I got a chance finally to allow the songs and ideas that had been brewing inside me to take shape and imagine the world that I wanted to inhabit as an artist.

Officially, a far as the paperwork, October 4, 2001 was when the state recognised me for all purposes legal and otherwise as Sananda Maitreya. The interesting thing I learned from the experience was that you can change your name to anything that you like but you cannot change your social security number. If yet another transformation is required in this lifetime, I will leave my name alone and fight to change my number. The name Sananda Maitreya has no religious affiliation, and I am a catholic.

Sananda Maitreya's The Rise Of The Zugebrian Time Lords is out on Tree House. See www.Sananda.org

Tom Sheehan, Alan Davidson, Sananda Maitreya

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